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Arnaud's Masterpiece · A Romance of the Pyrenees

Walter Cranston Larned



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24 July, 1897

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ARNAUD'S MASTERPIECE

ARNAUD'S MASTER-PIECE A ROMANCE OF THE PYRENEES

BY WALTER CRANSTON LARNED



NEW YORK CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

MDCCCXCVII

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Chapter Headings

AGAIN IN THE TEMPLARS' CHURCH . 182
THE END OF ARNAUD'S QUEST . . 188
ARNAUD PROMISES AN ALTARPIECE . 199
THE ANNUNCIATION 204
THE PICTURE'S MESSAGE TO SARANDÉ 209

CHAPTER HEADINGS

THE YOUNG ARTIST IN THE TEMPLARS' CHURCH 1
ANGELA IN THE FIELD OF THE POPPIES 9
THE DAWN OF BEAUTY 15
ANOTHER VISION OF ANGELA . . . 23
GAVARNIE AND HUNAUD THE HERMIT 28
WEDDING MUSIC SILENCED 37
THE DEVOTION OF ANGELA 48
THE BEGINNING OF ARNAUD'S PENANCE 55
THE CAGOT MAIDEN 61
SARANDÉ'S HOME 67
A TALK WITH THE CAGOT CARPENTER 73
ARNAUD'S FIRST PICTURE OF SARANDÉ 79
BENAZRA'S STORY OF THE CAGOTS . . 90
THE CAGOTS' GOOD FRIDAY 103
ARNAUD'S TEMPTATION 113
THE STORM AND THE CAVE 118
ARNAUD'S CONFESSION 129
THE VOICES OF THE CLOISTER . . . 144
A LETTER FROM COUNT RAIMOND . . 155
HUNAUD'S LAST WORDS 161
ANGELA AND COUNT RAIMOND . . . 170

Chapter Headings

AGAIN IN THE TEMPLARS' CHURCH . 182
THE END OF ARNAUD'S QUEST . . 188
ARNAUD PROMISES AN ALTARPIECE . 199
THE ANNUNCIATION 204
THE PICTURE'S MESSAGE TO SARANDÉ 209

ARNAUD'S MASTERPIECE

THE YOUNG ARTIST IN THE TEMPLARS' CHURCH



N the church of the Templars at Luz sat a young man earnestly painting some frescos on the walls. He was working in the fervid spirit that filled the painter-monks of his day. Monks though they were, they loved their art. They thought it a part of their religion. It was not frescos alone that had been painted by this young acolyte. He had helped to adorn many a missal.

His love of beauty was intense, and his surroundings had made him keenly alive to what is beautiful in nature, in music, and in art. The church where he had painted and sung in his youth was built by the Templars when they came back from the Holy Land, and now in the time soon after the second crusade of the sainted King Louis it stood there, strong and

The Young Artist in the Templars' Church.

grim, not a church alone but also a fortified place, a strong guardian of the pass that led over the mountains toward Spain. It still stands on a hill crest in the midst of a valley, about which rise some of the grandest mountains of the Pyrenean chain. Almost all through the summer there was the brilliant white of the snow on the peaks, seen against the tender blue of the southern sky. Always there was the green of grass and trees. Not even winter took away the color charm from the meadows and the evergreens.

He had seen the rush of the rivers in the springtime and the quiet repose of their beauty when under the summer sun they reflected lovingly the blue of the sky.

Sometimes great masses of cloud covered the mountains, and filling even the valleys made the road that winds through the gorge toward Gavarnie a mysterious and awful pathway leading to realms of darkness, trembling with the roar of rushing water and the moaning of the wind among the Pyrenean pines. Amid such scenes his cradle had been rocked. When he was older the good grandmother would take him on sunshiny days out into the

green meadows in the valley by the river, and while she sat and knitted he ran hither and yon, sometimes plucking a flower, sometimes looking with awe upon the glittering mountains all about him, sometimes fascinated by the swiftly flowing river fresh from its fierce rush through the vast gorge, and not yet calm with the peace that awaits it later after its struggle is finished.

The Young Artist in the Templars' Church.

The youth was born an artist with a high-strung nature that could be thrilled in its depths by the chord of beauty alone, but he was also intensely susceptible, even at a very early age, to every religious influence — most of all, to the music of the church.

His family were Béarnais farmer-folk, but these farmers are not like others. They are a noble-looking race, and they are very proud, resembling greatly the Spaniards just across the mountains both in character and appearance.

It was natural that even a peasant who came of such a lineage should love the beautiful and the poetic, and feel in his pride that he could do whatever he wished in the expression of all the beauty he knew.

The Young Artist in the Templars' Church.

No objection was made when at twelve years of age the boy said he wished to be a painter; and he went to study with the old monk who was painting in the churches of St. Sauveur and in the Templars' church at Luz.

From such teaching the love of art and religion grew together in his passionate nature. Would they keep even pace, and each holding a hand lead him ever onward in perfect serenity toward the highest in beauty and the highest in faith; or would one outstep the other and choose his path for him, while the forgotten one lagged behind?

No such question suggested itself to the mind of Arnaud de Béarn as he sat painting by his master in the church, nor did he once think that such a question might be asked when he heard the solemn chants and joined his voice with the others in hymns of praise before the altar.

The beauty of his colors, the beauty of his forms, the beauty of the church, the heavenly beauty of the music, the scarcely earthly beauty of the mountains and the sky, wind-swept with flying, fleecy clouds, all filled his very soul to overflowing.

Surely the Lord is a God of beauty, sang his glad spirit. Surely all lovely things in nature and in art, in earth and in heaven, hold out their hands to each other, and rejoice in the Creator of all beauty, who made them one in their spirit of grateful worship to him.

The Young Artist in the Templars' Church.

And so the days of his youth passed on, ever filled with a joyous dream and sometimes with a religious ecstasy. When he returned to his home after he had painted all day in the church, or wandered among the mountains, seeking to find life for his palette in their wondrous tints, even that humble cottage was glorified. The great fire in the room where they cooked and ate was gorgeous in color, graceful in varying forms of flame and smoke. The ancient rafters were soft with the tone that comes only with the years. Many an artist has loved to paint such a scene. Arnaud felt its beauty; indeed, he was beginning to know that there was beauty everywhere, and that thought made his life eager, impetuous, up-springing, because of the sensuous joy that was about him even when he sang the chants of the church.

The Young Artist in the Templars' Church.

It must have been that very sensuous joy which blinded his eyes and deafened his ears so that he neither saw nor heard the Cagots when they went to worship in the chapel whence the high altar might be seen through an opening in the wall, but which was without other connection with the main body of the church. His life was destined to have a closer relation to this mysterious people, who were separated even in their worship from others who knelt before the altar, and whose life in their mountain fastnesses was neither known nor sought to be known by those who worshipped within the Templar church. This dissonance of exclusion had not yet disturbed the harmony of that religious chord which had thrilled the trembling nerves of a nature sensitive in its highest, and also in its lowest point, to every color, sound, form, thought, that had in it a suggestion of the beautiful.

Nor did he wonder why the women and the men were separated in their worship. He did know that the Templar church was marred as to its beauty of architecture by building a second story, as it might well be called, in the nave, — a story sus-

pended midway in the height of the columns, and having no relation in constructive thought to the rest of the church.

The Young Artist in the Templars' Church.

The reason for this peculiar construction had not occurred to him, nor had his teacher, the painter-monk, ever explained why men and women should be kept apart when they came to God's house to worship him, nor why it was forbidden to any who loved Christ to come openly before his altar, and kneel there in reverence beside all others who loved him. An artist is rarely a theorist. Some secret of beauty has been revealed to him, and to him has been given the power to express it, though, alas! only in part. This expression becomes an absorbing passion, and he does not wish to analyze it. It is enough that he feels it, and there is a noble unrest in him because he cannot fitly tell what he feels. There is also an almost indignant resentment against any one who cannot see as he sees, and feel as he feels, that throbbing, heart-stirring loveliness infusing all the Creator's works. It is this that seems to him alone worth striving for. It would be the one supreme

The Young Artist in the Templars' Church.

attainment of life, if any expression of it could be attained.

There were days when "art was still religion," and in such days lived Arnaud de Béarn in the Templars' town of Luz beneath the Pyrenean mountains, whose glittering snow-crests dazzled even the eagle eye of the artist wide open to the very sun itself if the secret of beauty might there be discovered.

ANGELA IN THE FIELD OF THE POPPIES



HE artist's first quest for a beauty higher than he had yet known, was in its purity like that of Parsifal when he sought the Holy Grail. It was an upreaching for the immaterial, and there was no grossness in it. The aim of the pure knight was toward what is not wholly of this world, nor quite to be seen except by the eye of the spirit. The aim of the artist in the Pyrenean valley was toward the highest and best of beauty in what he saw about him, and he wished and prayed that his eyes might become keener in their sight, his hand subtler in its touch, so that he might more clearly see, more fitly express those ever new, ever more winning charms that seemed to be in everything he

Angela in the Field of the Poppies.

looked upon, yet would not yield their secrets fully either to his eye or to his brush.

Surely there must be some reason for this failure that came always. Surely one who loves with deepest passion all that is beautiful must find where beauty's heart is, and learn its every throb. If only once his finger were on that passionate pulse all his after work would be alive, beating in rhythm with the currents of the very life of beauty itself.

This unsatisfied passion of the young man made him uneasy. He could not stay all day in the church painting his frescos, illuminating his missals, or talking with the simple painter-monk. Often he would throw down his brush and palette, and rush out into the open air where the mountains were about him, and the sky lifted his thought even above the snow-peaks.

He grew more and more fond of these long walks. Sometimes he went down into the valley and followed the stream; sometimes he went up through the gorge, and passing the cataracts whose spray in the springtime was blinding, he would

come to the mountain amphitheatre of Gavarnie, where beings of another world played their unearthly dramas on a stage held mountain high toward heaven.

Angela in the Field of the Poppies.

But even such walks as these, romantic, inspiring as they were, did not satisfy him. There was a burning restlessness within him, and he knew not how to quench the fire of it. Its flame was always fed by the thought that he surely did not yet know the secret of beauty, and could not find means wherewith to grasp it.

One day, his father and mother and the old grandmother with whom he had played as a child in the meadows by the stream, were all seated together in the raftered room with the great fireplace. The young man had come back from his painting in the church, and the longing in him had become a torture beyond further endurance. He wished to rush forth into the world alone, and take no rest until he had found that which his artist soul craved.

He left the cottage, giving no reason, but saying that he must go away alone, and he went wandering through the valley, mile after mile, scarce knowing what he sought.

Angela in the Field of the Poppies.

His heart was hot within him, and his spirit was full of longing. He could not rest until mere bodily fatigue compelled him to stop. He was then near the ancient town of Salida, and there he saw a maiden whose face seemed to him such a vision of beauty as the rising sun gives when it touches the world with the ever new glory of the dawn.

What was this woman? In the Templars' church at Luz he never had seen a woman except those who came there to worship on Sundays, and even they were so far away from him that he hardly knew that they were there. Arnaud had seen his mother and his grandmother, but they did not suggest to him any thought of the beauty of woman. He loved them devotedly, but they entered not at all into his art life. The truth was that neither of them was beautiful, though both might be at least picturesque to the thought of a matured artist. Of the village maidens of St. Sauveur and Luz, Arnaud had seen but little, because his life from boyhood had been spent mostly in the church, or among the fields and mountains. He was nearly one half monk already and the

other half painter, but there was a part of his nature that was still empty, and aching because of its emptiness.

Angela in the Field of the Poppies.

It was into that unoccupied country in his mind, that Angela stepped, as she suddenly rose and looked at him from a field at Salida where she had been plucking red poppies to adorn her room. The brilliant color of the flowers was all about her. As the meadow sloped upward behind her, the red and green of the poppies and the grass made a background for her face and form. Her hair was of auburn touched with gold, and her eyes were blue like darkest violets. Her figure, though rounded and beautiful in every curve, was slender, and not in the least like the figures of the village maidens whom Arnaud was accustomed to see but who had never attracted him by any charm of beauty.

The artist's first thought was that one of the madonnas he had painted, but could not make live, was here before him really alive. It was true that the maiden's face was as spiritual in expression as that of any madonna, but it was not the spiritual part of it that overcame the painter's thought as he stood there in wonder. It

Angela in the Field of the Poppies.

was its womanly beauty. That was what he had never seen before. Before that he stood touched and thrilled, feeling, if he really felt at all, that his quest had not been in vain. His restlessness, his wanderings, were to cease because some goddess had come to tell what he longed for, to complete, as he had never dreamed it could be completed, that ideal of beauty which he had so long sought to grasp, but which had ever eluded him.

In the field on Salida's hillside, where Angela stood in the sunshine holding her poppies in her hand, was the turning-point of Arnaud de Béarn's life. Suddenly the placid stream of his existence had been whirled into rapids. Perhaps there were cataracts beyond. Perhaps the wild violence of it would not cease until at last it found peace in the sea.

THE DAWN OF BEAUTY



T is the custom of the Béarnais folk to greet one another when they meet. So the young man and the young maiden, thus suddenly meeting, sought for fitting words, but neither knew what to say. Angela was as romantic in temperament as Arnaud was eager and impetuous. The sight of the strong, dark, almost Spanish face, with black eyes fixed in an ardent though dreamy gaze upon herself had affected her strangely.

It was not embarrassment that made them hesitate to speak, for both were as simple and natural as children. Arnaud was thinking only of the beauty that had so suddenly dawned upon his startled eyes, and he feared it might vanish if he disturbed it by a word. Angela's sur-

prise and interest kept her silent too, and then she was a maiden, and it was not for her to speak first.

"How beautiful your poppies are!" said Arnaud at last. "Did you come here to gather them? I never saw such beautiful poppies before."

"Yes," said Angela, "I often come here for them, because it seems to me they are brighter in this field than any other."

"Then you must live near by," said Arnaud, "and yet I have never seen you before."

"I live in the castle yonder with my father, Count Raimond de Moncade; but we have only lived here a little while because my father has been away so long with the King in his wars, and before he went away we lived far from here. The King gave him the castle when they came home. And do you too live near here?"

"My home is in the little village below the Templars' church at Luz."

"The Templars' church! Ah, yes, my father has told me of that. It is a fortress too, is it not? I think he said it was a stronghold that guards the pass leading over the mountains."

"Yes, it is indeed a strong fortress, but it is the church within the ramparts that I love the best, for I do my work there, and I know that any painter would delight in such a place."

"You are an artist then? That must be a delightful life. I love pictures."

"Alas! I am not an artist, but I long to be one. Sometimes I think I never can succeed, however much I try, for the secret of art's beauty always eludes me."

"I wish I could see your pictures. May I not come to the church some day, and you will show them to me?"

"I do not think they would let you come to the church except on Sunday, when the women come to worship there. There is a place made for them where they sit apart, I know not why. But I do not wish you to see my pictures now. They are not good enough. I cannot bear to look at them myself. I would far rather show you one of nature's pictures. Have you seen Gavarnie?"

"No, but I have heard about it. It must be wonderful."

"It is indeed grand, but it is stern, almost awful in its sublimity. Young

maidens like you would care more for a tenderer, softer beauty. I know not why I thought of Gavarnie. It is a long way from here, and you are a count's daughter. You would not wish to climb among the mountains."

"I have loved the mountains and dwelt among them ever since I can remember. The steepest paths have no terrors for me."

"Ah! perhaps then some day you will go, but I ought not to ask you to go with me. Surely you must be the maiden who is to wed the King of Béarn. Your name is Angela, is it not?"

"Yes, that is my name; but why do you not tell me yours?"

"Oh, I am only a poor painter, and I did not think you would care to know my name, but since you honor me by asking, it is Arnaud de Béarn. I wonder that I have spoken to you so boldly. Please forgive me."

"Nay, you have said nothing amiss. Surely a count's daughter may love nature as well as a peasant girl, and of what else should an artist speak unless of beauty in nature and in art?"

"I thank you for forgiving me. If I

may offer any excuse I can say it was because I saw your love for beauty, that I spoke as I did. No one who does not feel for beauty like an artist would care for the poppies as you do, and there is quick sympathy between those who love the beautiful." *The Dawn of Beauty.*

"You do not need forgiveness. Surely I spoke as freely as you did, nor do I think I did any harm in telling you that I was the Count's daughter, and even if I am to marry the King I shall love the flowers and Gavarnie none the less for that. I am like all the Béarnaise maidens: I love freedom, and I mean to enjoy it while I may. But now I must go home; I have lingered too long, and I am afraid my dear flowers will fade before I can put them in my room."

"And I too ought to go, but will you not come again to the field of the poppies? To-morrow you will want more flowers, and if you will let me I will come to help you gather them."

"Perhaps I will come. I will ask my father if I may go to Gavarnie some day, for I long to see those leaping cataracts, those grand cliffs."

"Ah! do come. I will be here, and may the sun be as bright as it is to-day!"

She turned down the path that led through the meadow toward the river, and thence went upward toward the castle. Arnaud, like one entranced, watched her beautiful form until he could no longer see her; then he turned away, thinking to take the homeward road, but he wandered scarce knowing where he went, for he saw but one thing, the picture of the maiden in the poppy field. He had asked her to come again on the morrow, that he might see her there, but he did not dare to hope that he could see that picture again. It was too beautiful to be repeated. It never could be as perfect again as it was that summer day. Something would come to mar it. Would it be the thought of the marriage with the King? What had marriage to do with it? This painter-monk had never even thought of marriage. For beauty — beauty — beauty his soul longed, and here was the beauty of the woman. It mattered not if she married the King if only he could see her. He longed to look upon her because the look brought

to his thought that secret that only she could reveal. *The Dawn of Beauty.*

As he walked on, the poppies were redder than they had ever been. There were white daisies. Never before had he seen their purity. Birds were singing. It seemed as if he had not heard their music until now. Surely in the clouds there were lovely lines like those of her form. Now he began to understand their beauty, because the living beauty of the woman gave life to their inanimate charm. At last night came on, and still he wandered, lost in dreams. He had seen the twilight, the gorgeous colors of the sunset melting into almost invisible tones of night, like bells, half hushed, but pealing faintly the moon's approach. Then came the queen of night, and the peaks of snow glistened, gleamed — they would have been warm if they were not so white. It was an unknown land just opening to his sense.

Why should this touch of womanhood make skies and mountains new to the sight even as if the artist's eye had never yet seen them? He knew not why this marvel had come to him. He walked as

The Dawn of Beauty.

in a dream, far on into the night, watching the moon until the mountains hid her chaste beauty; then he rested awhile in some peasant's lonely cottage, but before dawn he was again awake, waiting for the sun to give something of Angela's color to the awakening earth.

ANOTHER VISION OF ANGELA

HE knew it would be long ere she would come again to the field of the poppies, even if she came there at all that day; but he could not resist the longing to see her once again. It was not love that prompted him to go toward the castle where she dwelt, or if it were the beginning of love, Arnaud knew it not. What he felt was the artist's passion for beauty. Never before had his eyes rested upon such a picture as he had seen for those few brief moments, and well he knew the maiden was the secret of its loveliness, therefore he must see her again. Art would henceforth be nothing unless inspired by that face and form, and art was his life. He felt he had a right to see her because his

Another Vision of Angela.

art needed her. If he had not been carried away by this passion he would have remembered that Angela was to wed the King, and it was not for him to look upon her again, if her beauty had such power over him that he could not banish the thought of it even for a moment. He did think a little of the marriage, but he knew there was still time before that was to happen. The thought of it only made the present more precious. Afterward he might not see her more; but now she was free to wander again among the fields, perhaps even to go to Gavarnie. He did not think there could be any harm in his seeing her while he might, before the King claimed her for his own, and then he would paint her picture, and her beauty would be always near him. Neither Angela nor the King should know of that, and if they did know, they would be glad that his art had found its inspiration. Not even seeking to resist this desire to look upon her again, he went on toward the castle, hoping that he might at least catch a glimpse of her if he lingered near it.

Soon he was beneath the walls of the

ancient building. Two strong towers guarded the gate, and between them was the drawbridge that had been raised for the night and had not yet been lowered. On the other side of the castle were the living rooms, and one beautiful round tower with conical roof rose from among them. About this tower some doves were fluttering forth to meet the light of day, for the first flush of the dawn was even now in the sky. Perhaps the doves made Arnaud think that this was Angela's tower, and he gazed eagerly toward it. There was a window there that might be hers. Long he looked toward it, and at last the casement was opened.

Another Vision of Angela.

Angela had risen early and come to the window that she might see the ice-clad mountains in warm life again beneath the sun's ardent caress. She stood there in all her beauty, and Arnaud looked upon her once and put his hand before his eyes, for he felt that he had desecrated a sanctuary by looking upon her beauty half unveiled. The maiden thought not of any one near her at the sunrise time, and allowed the loose folds of her night-robe to fall away from her lovely neck, as she

Another Vision of Angela.

stood at the window. The robe was white, but the dazzling whiteness of the neck and bosom half revealed beneath it, put to shame all other whiteness.

The grace, the purity, the innocence, the passion that might be but was not yet alive, thrilled the artist's very soul. Though the maiden in the casement thought she was alone even the coming of the sun abashed her, and as the snow mountains were flushed with pink at the first touch of the sun's rays, so did a rosy blush come over the whiteness of her face and breast as the light fell full upon her. Hastily she closed the casement and began to think about the King, who was soon to meet her in the church, where she should promise to be his forever. The artist dreamed of a beauty come down from heaven to give new life to all beauty that had been before, and he wished that his dream might never end.

Not far away, in his château by the river, the King was dreaming of the maiden whom he loved, and longing for that happy day when he could claim her for his own.

King Gaston of Béarn was a noble man

and a famous soldier. He had been a good ruler over his kingdom, and his renown was great; but no happiness had ever come to him such as filled his heart when Angela promised to be his wife, for he had loved her at first sight, and his passion grew stronger day by day.

Another Vision of Angela.

GAVARNIE AND HUNAUD THE HERMIT

ANGELA knew that the King loved her, but she did not know the depth of that love, for nothing in her own heart could explain it to her. She knew that he was a great man, and she admired him. Her father, whose lightest wish she never had opposed, wished her to marry him, and she had consented, not unwillingly, for surely she must learn to love a man so valiant and so renowned. Even as she sat there in her chamber, after she had closed the casement, and thought about the King and her approaching marriage, she wished none the less to go again to the poppy-field and see the young artist, though she could hardly tell why. She longed to see that wonderful Gavarnie of which he had

spoken; but she could not yet promise to go there, for her father had not been at home when she returned the day before, and she had not been able to tell him of her wish. Nevertheless, perhaps she would go to the field again. Surely it could do no harm to gather a few more poppies; and by and by she went, knowing full well that Arnaud would be there.

Gavarnie
and
Hunaud
the
Hermit.

He was there, but the power of her beauty had become so strong upon him that he trembled at the very thought of seeing her again, nor could he believe she would really come. This meeting was not like the first one, for there was something in the heart of each that neither wished to tell. She spoke again of Gavarnie, and told him of her father's absence from home; and she did not conceal her wish to go there when her father gave her permission.

They talked awhile together as they gathered the red blossoms, and Arnaud went back with her to the castle. There he left her, but with the hope of seeing her soon again, for now that he was sure she wished to go with him to Gavarnie he felt that her father would not oppose it.

Gavarnie and Hunaud the Hermit.

When Count Raimond returned, Angela told him of her meeting with Arnaud, and what had passed between them, and how she longed to see that wonderful Gavarnie of which he had spoken. To this the Count made no objection. She might have the young artist for her guide if she wished it, since he knew the mountains so well, and the Count would send with her two of his trusted retainers to take care of her. As for himself he would gladly go, but he cared little for wild gorges, and he had had enough fatigue in the wars. He would rather rest quietly in the castle. Thus it was arranged, and not long afterward Angela and Arnaud, with the Count's retainers, took their way toward Gavarnie.

In the early dawn they went together through the gorge — the fearful gorge — that must be passed ere Gavarnie can be reached. The cliffs towered above them, the water thundered below. Its never-ceasing struggle with the rocky barrier made it more and more impatient. Clouds of mist rose from the tortured waters. The artist and the maiden were nearly blinded by the wind-swept clouds that

filled the gorge. There had been little talk between these two. The grandeur and beauty about them stilled speech. Nor could they think of anything except the encircling wonders of nature. The gorge became narrower and more narrow. Sometimes it seemed as if the fortress cliffs would not permit another step toward Gavarnie. They were guarding the secrets of their fastnesses. True, the stream had broken their guard and was rushing toward the valley to tell of the giants and their dwelling-place, but man should not enter there if they could help it. They frowned angrily upon these two who dared seek Gavarnie. Nothing daunted, the artist and the maiden pursued their perilous way. The blinding mist in the deepest, narrowest part of the gorge was passed at last. Higher and higher rose the path, climbing along the cliff sides. Arnaud and Angela went on and on, knowing now that they were nearing Gavarnie.

As they passed beneath a rock that overhung the road both saw what seemed to be an entrance to a cave. Arnaud had never seen it before, and he was eager to

Gavarnie and Hunaud the Hermit.

explore it. Clinging to climbing plants and little trees he made his way at last to the dark doorway. He wished to enter it but he dared not do so, because his eyes were so full of the sunlight that in the darkness he would surely stumble and fall. Startled by the blackness of the cave thus suddenly opened before him, he stepped back, thinking that when he had regained his strength he would go again to the entrance and wait there beneath its portal, until his eyes became accustomed to the darkness that was so intensely contrasted with the sunlight.

Arnaud did not need to wait long. While he stood there, trying to penetrate the gloom, some one came toward him. He did not see this man who approached until he reached the very entrance of the cave, because all beyond the low opening was shrouded with darkness.

He who came from the cave was so emaciated that he hardly seemed to be alive, but he wore a monk's habit and the cowl was over his head. Arnaud de Béarn was a brave man, but he shrank back before this figure, coming from the depths of the mountain and looking more

like one who had died and come back to earth for a little while, than like a living man. Angela was on the path below the cave. Arnaud feared for her. He turned about and meant to climb down again to save her from alarm because of this seeming spectre. It was too late. Arnaud did descend the hill, but the monk, if monk he were, went with him.

Until now there had been no word spoken, nor could either tell the reason for such a strange, unbroken silence. Both came down at last to the path where Angela stood watching their descent. Arnaud came first to her, and then came the weird unearthly creature, who lived in the mountain's depths. As he looked upon the maiden he lifted a crucifix, which he held in his right hand, and spoke. His voice was strange. It did not seem like the voice of a man. Perhaps its tones had been re-echoed too often from the walls of the deep, dark cave that was his dwelling-place.

"Who is this maiden?" said the monk to the artist; but before Arnaud could speak he said, "Nay, do not answer, be-

cause I know. She is to wed the King of Béarn. Her name is Angela."

The monk looked upon her in sadness and spoke no word for a long time. Arnaud did not speak, and Angela was overcome with fear, because she could not understand why this strange man came out of the mountain to stand before her and to talk with her. Was he human? She did not know. Again the monk spoke:

"This maiden is about to be the bride of the King of Béarn. That can never be; it is forbidden from on high. I say no more. The Pope will say what yet remains to be said."

The monk clasped his hands and looked toward heaven in prayer; then he folded his robe about him and put the cowl close down over his eyes. Up the steep hill he went, and Arnaud and Angela saw him no more.

Angela thought she had seen a vision. The cowled anchorite coming from his cave far down in the depths of the mountain did not seem real, but rather some unearthly creature. He had spoken but a few words and disappeared as suddenly as he came.

Arnaud and Angela walked on toward Gavarnie. They were silent. The glorious beauty of the sun-lit, snow-clad mountains could not take away the thought of the monk and his words of ill omen.

Gavarnie
and
Hunaud
the
Hermit.

This strange walk together began to seem like a dream. Arnaud's vision of her in the field of poppies became unreal too, like some fairy tale. The marriage with Gaston the King began to seem unreal, like all else. The artist even thought he could not really have seen the beauty of the woman half revealed in the dawn of the day, that beauty which had changed his life. The unearthly monk made everything mysterious. Angela did not for a moment think that what the anchorite had said ought to change her purpose. Her father wished that she should marry King Gaston, for he had been the King's chosen captain, and he loved and revered his sovereign. She did not hesitate, not for one moment. The monk might be real, he might be from another world; but she had given her promise to the King, and her father had blessed their betrothal. Certainly she would be his

Gavarnie and Hunaud the Hermit.

bride, but she would go no farther toward Gavarnie. She was trembling and afraid. The mountains were no longer grand and beautiful. They were angry. They were frowning blackly upon her, and they were sheltering below their cliffs the being of ill omen who had uttered such terrible words. In silence and awe they retraced their steps toward Salida, and Angela went back to her home, whence she came not forth again until her wedding day.

WEDDING MUSIC SILENCED



N the bright morning of the wedding not a cloud dimmed the sunshine. The snow-peaks glistened with a pure whiteness that told of the bride's beauty. The river laughed and lifted little wavelets to gleam like diamonds in the growing light.

King Gaston, with many lords and ladies of his court, came from his château by the river-side, up through the valley that leads to Luz and St. Sauveur. It was a gay and brilliant cavalcade, for all were decked in festal array, and the bright colors of many a plume and scarf and mantle gleamed and glowed in the full light like living flowers moving on through the green meadows by the river's bank. And the hearts of those who rode with the King were glad. They knew his valor and his

Wedding Music Silenced.

worth. They had seen the humble peasants by the wayside press toward him with loving gratitude, because he had been a good king to them, and had cared for even little things that might make their hard lives easier. The knights had seen him in battle and gloried in the prowess of his lance, and the older men, more thoughtful, were no less proud of his wisdom in statecraft. With unfeigned rejoicing all went with him to the church at Salida, where he would meet at the altar the bride who was to bless his life.

As the gay procession neared the sacred building the notes of the organ were heard within. The organist was dreaming over his keys, thinking how he might best tell with his music something of the joy which was to come that day to the great King and his beautiful bride. Hymns of marriage, hymns of love, anthems of deep gratefulness for God's good gifts were in the organ tones.

The King and his courtiers paused a moment to listen, then entered the church, and with slow and stately step went toward the chancel. Count Raimond and his daughter, with their retainers, all in

bridal array, entered the church by the transept, and when the King reached the altar, the Count led Angela to him.

Wedding Music Silenced.

Arnaud de Béarn had gone very early to the Templars' church at Luz. He had begun to paint when the sun's first rays touched the ancient walls. What was he painting? He did not know. It was what he could not express. He had not seen enough. It was something of a beauty never known before, but it was not understood even now. He had seen it, but only for a moment, nor had he ever dreamed before that such beauty could exist. He forgot his painting, and was conscious only of an intense wish to see Angela again. To Salida he must go to look upon her standing before the altar with the King.

Angela in the church was not the maiden whom he had seen in the field of the poppies. Her robe was beautiful. She wore a circlet of gems, the King's gift, half hidden by her gold-red hair. Her bearing was proud and her beauty dazzling. The King stood by her side, — a man who had conquered many and had that pride of conquest in his mien; a man who

Wedding Music Silenced.

loved his people, and for them there was a blessing in his look; a man who loved his bride and knew what such a passion meant. Kind and proud, loving and grateful, was King Gaston, as he stood beneath the rainbow light of the windows with his bride by his side.

The priests came in their splendid vestments. The choristers sang with pure voice the music of man and wife.

What did the artist think as he sat far back in the church and gazed upon all this splendor? He thought little and felt less. This was not beauty to him. There was splendor of color, there was inspiration of music, but his brush would not respond. Angela and the King, as they stood there before the altar, beneath the light of the glorious windows, made a beautiful picture, but he could not paint it. It was not possible yet, he knew not why. He did not love Angela. He did not love any human being in the same way that he loved beauty.

That secret of beauty had been partially revealed to him in the sight of Angela in the early dawn. He felt then that he was profaning a sanctuary, and he closed his

eyes. There was no reason to close them now. Arnaud had seen marriages before, many times. They had not been as splendid in color and music as this one, but he had cared little about them. They did not touch his deepest emotions, — that part of his nature that must be touched if art's goddess was to come to his easel. There was another feeling in Arnaud's heart that day when Angela was to marry the King. He felt and he knew that there was a tragedy in it. There was no reason to think that so beautiful a scene could have anything but love and joy about it. Nevertheless the lonely artist saw what no one else in that thronging crowd of knights and ladies could see. He felt that the beauty of Angela was not for King Gaston, and that those bridal bells so joyously ringing would soon change their peal, and chime an anthem of deepest sadness. Arnaud could not have told why he felt as he did feel on Angela's wedding day. Something was revealed to him that he himself could not fully understand; but it must have been a dim remembrance of the hermit's words of ill omen.

Wedding Music Silenced.

Wedding Music Silenced.

It was made plain before him more quickly than he had thought. The first prayers had been said and the opening strains of the joyous marriage music had been played, when suddenly there came a voice, weird, unearthly, saying: —

"I am Hunaud the Hermit. Give me entrance here! I must speak to the King and to her who would not listen to my words. I spoke to her in the gorge by the cataracts of Gavarnie, and told her she might not wed this King who loved her, because the Pope would not allow it. She did not heed me then, but she must heed me now lest further mischief befall. Let me pass, I say! I would speak to them both face to face."

There was a silence as of death over all the people. Slowly they fell back, and way was made for the tall but bent figure of the anchorite, who held on high a crucifix. All clothed in deepest black save for the white cross on his breast, he moved like a spectre among the gayly-clad lords and ladies. Not even the light of the joyous windows could make his form other than a black shadow as he slowly moved toward the high altar, before which

stood the King in his splendor and Angela in her beauty.

Wedding Music Silenced.

The King, indignant, turned from the altar to confront this seeming apparition. He laid his hand upon his sword-hilt, but the monk did not stop. Count Raimond sprang from the crowd toward the altar steps. He thought a public insult was given to his daughter, and as he reached her side his sword leapt from the scabbard, and he held it protectingly between her and the black figure of doom that, nevertheless, came steadily on. The choristers ceased their chants, the organ tones were hushed, the frightened lords and ladies said no word, though here and there an eager warrior half drew his sword.

At last the cowled monk, in his robes of black, stood before the altar between the King and Angela.

"In the name of Christ and of his Church on earth, and in the name of his Vicegerent who rules us here, Pope Gregory the Tenth, I forbid this marriage," said the monk, in a low and solemn voice.

"Who art thou? Whence comest thou?" said King Gaston. "By what

Wedding Music Silenced.

right dost thou assume to stay the nuptials of a king and his bride? Speak, or thy life shall be the forfeit. Art thou indeed a priest come from the Pope? Thou hast said that thou art a hermit, and perhaps thy mind is deranged because of long fasting and solitude. Surely thou comest not from Rome. Declare thyself! Who art thou?"

"I come not from Rome, but I come with Rome's message. Mine ears heard it in the cave where I dwell down in the mountains' depths where the wild water rushes by me and thunders in the darkness below. I hear and see many things in that darkness that men who live in the sunlight do not hear nor see. I am a monk, an unworthy follower of Saint Peter. If I were worthy I could bear this message myself; but it is given to me only to say that the messenger of the Pope is at hand. I tell you of his coming, and I bid you await it. This much I may do. May God grant that evil to come may be stayed by my words."

"I will not wait," said King Gaston; "proceed with thine office, holy father."

But the bishop was trembling. There

was something ominous in the look of the monk, something awful in his words. Angela had sunk, half unconscious, into her father's arms. Even the bold Count Raimond paused, and his sword-point sank to the floor. In this frightened hush none knew what to say or to do, except the hermit, who lifted his crucifix on high and said, —

Wedding Music Silenced.

"Ye have not long to wait. The Pope's legate is at hand. Even now he is approaching the church door."

It was true. An embassy had come from Pope Gregory X., bearing his decree forbidding this marriage, because the contracting parties were too nearly akin. There was no help, no hope. All then knew that resistance was useless. If King Gaston disobeyed, his kingdom could be put under an interdict and there could be no more baptism, mass, marriage, or burial in his dominions. Better that he and Angela should suffer, than his people be thus punished for no fault of theirs.

The King bowed his head before the legate and said, "If what thou sayest be true, father, we must submit, even if our

Wedding Music Silenced.

hearts are broken. I thought not this relationship was so close as to make our marriage unlawful."

"Nor did I think so," said Count Raimond. "Has it been so decided by the Pope himself?"

"Yes, my son, and after careful study of the canons, for the matter, as ye say, was not free from doubt. Here is the final decree in which the reasons for it are clearly set forth. My children, ye must part here and now; it would be sin should ye remain longer together."

The prelate turned toward the assembled lords and ladies. "Go hence," he said, "and be thankful that your King has not been permitted to break the laws of Holy Church."

Slowly and silently went forth those who had come in so gayly. There was no music now. The church was quiet. With a mute, passionate gesture of farewell the King turned from Angela, and with faltering footsteps left the church. Count Raimond drew his half fainting daughter close to him, and very slowly they too reached the door, and turned toward their home.

Arnaud had waited in the dark corner, not following the others, for he wished to see the end of this tragedy whose shadow had been upon him even amid all the splendor, the beauty, and the joy.

Wedding Music Silenced.

The prelate and the monk still stayed in the church, praying before the altar that help might come to hearts so suddenly afflicted, and thanking God that they had been permitted to prevent what in their creed was a deadly sin.

Arnaud in the darkness did not pray, nor did he even think clearly. He had seen a broken-hearted king, a half fainting bride; but as yet he knew not what this strange scene might mean for him, though he knew well it meant much, else would not his very deepest soul be so stirred within him.

THE DEVOTION OF ANGELA

COUNT RAIMOND bore Angela to his home. The maiden soon revived. The shock had been severe, but the blow had not struck upon the deepest feelings of the heart because King Gaston had not stirred passionate love within her. Nevertheless, she had been shamed before all the people. It must seem to them that she had been willing to wed the King unlawfully, to sell herself to him that she might be called a queen. She blushed hotly as the thought came to her. Never again could she look one of them in the face. To them her guilt was plain as noonday. They would not remember there had been doubt about the lawfulness

of the marriage. Angela laid her head upon her father's breast and burst into a flood of tears. *The Devotion of Angela.*

"I will see no more of this cruel world, never — never again!" she sobbed. "I will go far away where no one shall ever see me, for I am shamed. I will hide me behind convent walls. No, I will not do that; I will seek another refuge from this hard Pope who has broken the King's heart and disgraced your daughter. I will make a place for myself and perhaps for others who have suffered as I have, where we can wait until death releases us from his baneful power."

"Angela! Angela! speak not so. Remember he is our father in God. Be not rebellious but submissive. My own heart is hot within me, but we must submit to Christ's Vicar on earth. But what said you, my daughter, that you would do? I do not understand."

"Oh, father, I cannot be King Gaston's wife. I am shamed, and no other will wed me. I must live alone. Surely there are others who are afflicted even as I am. I will go far hence and build a home for them and for me. There we can await

death, for life as others live it is forbidden to us. When I have built it I shall dwell there nor ever go outside its gates, until my corpse is carried thence, nor shall any others who come within those walls go out from thence until Death's Angel calls."

"Wilt thou indeed do this, my daughter?"

"I will, I must. There is no hope for me in this life."

Very soon Angela began the building she had said she would build, nor did her father oppose her. He felt that it was well for her to be where the eyes of an unkind world could not see her who had been rejected as a king's bride at the very altar. It was not a long time before the retreat was finished, and Angela went to dwell there.

Arnaud de Béarn heard what had happened. His first thought after he heard it was to go to Angela and ask her to come to him, but he knew she would not come. They thought they did not love each other then. Her beauty had charmed him. His artistic instincts had fascinated her, but that was not the fulness of love. Nevertheless, he wished to see her again,

and this longing grew stronger as time went on. At last he sought to find the place where Angela had built this tomb for those still living. He did find out at last where it was. It was on the bank of a river, far from the home of King Gaston.

The Devotion of Angela.

Arnaud walked about this grim building. There were no windows that could be seen from without. There was a court-yard within, whence came the needed light. There were other women who had suffered as Angela had suffered, though some were separated from their husbands or their lovers, because of some other reason than a pope's decree. All these women were within the building Angela had built. They were not nuns. The place was not a nunnery. It was more like a prison. The jailer was Sorrow. He who must open the gates was Death.

The place was fascinating to Arnaud. He wished to enter the building that he might see Angela once again, but he could not enter it. In the daytime and in the night time he wandered about these strange walls with no windows, wondering if he might not at last find some opening and

The Devotion of Angela.

see there in the moonlight the exquisite form that once before had been revealed to him. Here was the passion of his artist's love. See Angela he must. He could not paint unless he saw her again.

Fortune favored him, and he did see her again. Some houses near the place of her retreat chanced to take fire. There was a high wind. The flames were threatening Angela's building. No one within those gloomy walls had spoken a word. No door or window had been opened. The people of the town knew that there were many noble women behind those dark walls, and it seemed to them as if death must surely come to those within, and come quickly. The Archbishop of Lyons was in the town. The frightened people had begged him to come to their aid. He came, and when he saw how sure was death's approach to those within the silent walls now touched by the wind-swept flame, the good man went as close as he could to the threatened building. He called aloud, —

"Angela," he cried, "I absolve thee and all those who are within from the vows ye may have taken. Come thence,

and come quickly, for surely ye will perish in the flames!" *The Devotion of Angela.*

Then Angela came to the little door, which she opened widely enough to speak to the Archbishop.

"Most holy father, we are here to await death. It matters not if it come by the flames. If it seems to you better that we should not perish now, pray that the flames may be extinguished."

The Archbishop looked in wonder upon the door that Angela was shutting. He knelt, and Arnaud knelt beside him. Their prayer was the same: it was a passionate pleading that those women might not die in the fury of the flames. It was an appeal to a higher power that the fire might be stayed before those devoted ones should perish. While the priest and the artist knelt and prayed, there was a change of wind. The danger was past. The furious fire soon lost its power because the newcome wind drove it back toward the ruins of the buildings it had already destroyed. The priest and the painter rose from their knees, and looked toward the home of Angela. Might they see her again? The artist longed for the vision

The Devotion of Angela.

of her form, the priest wished to bless her and to thank her for her devotion. He wished also to tell her that the people of the town had been inspired by her words and deeds, and had been thereby brought nearer heaven. But Angela did not come. She had gone to her cell and fallen upon her knees in prayer. Thence she came not forth until long after the Archbishop and the artist had departed.

When the fire was over, and there was no further danger to the building, no one could enter. The retreat was sacred. The beauty of Angela was there entombed. Never again could the artist see it or know aught of it. Was there another woman so beautiful as was Angela, when he saw her in the early dawn of that day, never to be forgotten, when he had come to her home and looked at her as she stood by the window?

THE BEGINNING OF ARNAUD'S PENANCE



RNAUD'S first thought was that he would enter the retreat by force and bring this woman out, that his eyes might be delighted by her beauty, and his art inspired by the charm of her lovely form and glowing color. He was stayed by the Archbishop, who laid his hand upon Arnaud's shoulder and said, —

"Wherefore desirest thou to enter there?"

"I wish to see Angela," replied Arnaud.

"Why dost thou wish to see her?" said the Archbishop.

"Because she is beautiful."

"My son, what hast thou to do with her beauty? The King Gaston thought her charms were for him, but the Pope

decreed otherwise. No other man can possess the beauty of Angela, for she awaits death in yonder building."

"It is not that! Oh, it is not that! Oh, father, I never even loved her, nor did she love me, but she was an inspiration to me in my art. Never until I saw her did I know what beauty was. Never before could I even see where in nature itself was the secret of beauty which I longed for, but could not find. I wanted to see her, I wanted to learn those lovely lines of her form, those charming living colors, so that I might paint madonnas for the altar, that might live in a beauty like hers. I cannot see her—I cannot see her. Was it wrong, O father, that I wished to see her? How could I help wishing for the sight of that beauty? I longed to make it imperishable with my brush and put it over the altar, that those who love the Madonna might see how she must have been when she was a maiden, chosen to be the mother of our Saviour. Was it a wrong thought? It did not seem wrong to me. Alas! where again can I find another so beautiful as Angela?"

"My son, I fear your thoughts have not been wholly about Angela's beauty. I greatly fear that you have been tempted to love her, and to love her unlawfully, when she was betrothed to another."

The Beginning of Arnaud's Penance.

"It is not true, father; or if it is true I did not know it, nor do I know it now. I longed to see her, but I did not long for anything more. What madness has come over me? Surely she is not the only beautiful woman. What can I do? What must I do? If I am in sin, let me confess and give me absolution. If I am not, give me advice. Help me to do rightly, for I am confused and in doubt about my duty."

"My son," said the Archbishop, "I fear that thou art in sin, and if thou knowest it not, it behooves thee to seek solitude that thou mayest have time for thought and thus come to a true knowledge of thyself. Get thee hence to the mountains, which are not far from thine home. Stay there and commune with thy God, and look upon his works which will there surround thee. Wait until thou hast regained calmness by prayer and self-restraint, and then thou shalt find that se-

The Beginning of Arnaud's Penance.

cret of beauty which thou desirest, that thou mayest use it for the adornment of the sanctuary, and for the help of those who wish to worship in purity and peace."

"I will go," said Arnaud, "but whither?"

"Knowest thou not some place far among the highest mountain-peaks to which thou canst go?"

"Yea, I know one such place that I have heard was near the mountain-tops, but I know not where it is nor whether there are people there. Perhaps some may dwell there, but there cannot be many."

"Go there, my son. Take my blessing and my prayer that God may deliver thee from sin and make thee fit to do the work he wishes thee to do."

Without another word Arnaud left the holy father, to seek the mountains, as he had been bidden to do. But where was this place? Arnaud knew little about it, but he had heard that somewhere, far up the mountains, there dwelt a mysterious people. It was their home he meant to seek.

He went toward the mountain-tops, where he had never been before, although he had been in the habit of walking about

his own home and even going as far as he did when he met Angela. But what were these mountain fastnesses to which he was banished? Was there one there to speak a word of comfort to him? Could he find there any inspiration of beauty for his art? He wandered on almost aimlessly, excepting that he wished to come to the place where the Archbishop had said all might be well for him. Arnaud hardly knew how to reach it, but he did know that the strange people who dwelt among those mountain-tops were called Cagots, and there was a very good reason why he could not easily find their home, for to the place where the Cagots lived no one went. It was even forbidden to tread in the footsteps of these people. Yet he was forced to go among them against his will, because the Archbishop had said that he must go. At this time it seemed to Arnaud's mind that the Archbishop was in the right. Later he thought he was altogether in the wrong.

The Beginning of Arnaud's Penance.

He never had thought of the Cagots, and knew nothing of them except from the tales of the Templars and the monks. There were not many who knew about

The Beginning of Arnaud's Penance.

them. There are not many now. Perhaps there are none who really know. They are a mysterious people. But Arnaud de Béarn had known something of them; he had heard of them while he painted in the church. Why could they not come in there where he sat with the Templars at the mass? Was he better than they? Such thoughts filled his mind as he toiled up the steep roads, and at last came far up among the mountain-peaks. There among the snows and the glaciers dwelt this people.

THE CAGOT MAIDEN



S Arnaud approached the dwelling-place of the Cagots, he met a young woman who was going along the road to her home.

"Will you please tell me where the Cagots live?" said Arnaud.

"Stand back!" she answered. "You are in danger of your life."

"But, why? surely you could not hurt me, and you look too kindly and lovely to lead me to any harm."

"Kindly and lovely?" said the girl. "What do you mean by such words? Full well I know that you and those like you could find no loveliness in a leper."

"You are no leper. Speak not of such things. Who said you were a leper?"

"I do not know. Some say we are lepers; some say we are Jews; some say we are Visigoths, and there are others who think we are Moors."

"I do not know," said Arnaud, "but I want to find out. Will you show me where you live? Lead on, I will follow."

"Follow me! Did I not tell you that could not be?"

"But why?"

"Because you do not want to be a leper. You do not want to be tainted by our corruption."

"There can be no corruption about you. I fear it not. Lead me to your home. I would rest, for I am very weary."

It was not strange that Arnaud should be willing to follow so beautiful a creature, even if there were danger in being near her. Her hair was black, her color deep and rich, and her form was supple and full of grace in every curve and movement. Her dress was gay with tints warm and bright like those the maidens wear in the valleys of Andalusia. How strange to find such brightness amid the everlasting snows!

Suddenly there flashed before Arnaud's eyes two pictures. One was the maiden of the tropics, with her splendid color, her flashing eyes, and the almost barbaric richness of the garments that were about her form, outlined against the cold, white purity of the snow-mountains with the pale blue of the sky behind them. The other picture was that of the lily-white, gold-crowned maiden, ethereal as a dream, outlined against the almost tropical splendor of the red poppies and the vivid green of the grass, so bright that sometimes it nearly yielded to the sunlight's yellow.

The Cagot Maiden.

It was strange that the voluptuous beauty should be amidst ice and snow, while the other loveliness, ideally pure, was surrounded by almost dazzling splendor. There was a deep meaning in the contrast of these two pictures that had more to do with the future of Arnaud's life than he dreamt of at the time. He saw the two pictures as by a flash of lightning, but he was too tired to reason about them, or even seek to know their meaning for himself.

The maiden went onward timidly, still half afraid to let a stranger come near her

because she knew it was forbidden. Never before had she even had speech with any who were not of her own race. Her mind had been narrowed by constant repression, and her pride, even her self-respect, had been humbled, crushed by the never-changing contempt and loathing that all felt for her except her own people.

The handsome stranger was kind to her. He spoke pleasant words. He did not fear her — nay, he asked her help, and wished to go to her own home and rest there. The girl's heart beat quickly, but she mastered her rising emotion. She went along the path, and Arnaud followed her.

As they went upward the scene became wilder and wilder until at last they came near to the snow line. Here was a valley almost surrounded by the white peaks, and in its midst on the bank of a stream that rushed out from the snow were some rude cabins clustered close together, as if seeking warmth from each other like sheep when the storm comes on.

"That is our home," said the girl.

"Oh, how thankful I shall be to rest there," said Arnaud, gratefully.

Following the stream, they soon reached the door of the humble home. How wonderful were the surroundings of this simple cabin! The snow was like silver, gleaming beneath the sun's touch, but it was restful in its purity, though dazzling in its whiteness. The great rocks held it in their arms. Brown giants they were, fondling and guarding the innocence and purity given to their care. There was rich color in these rocks, and its contrast with the white suggested the brilliant picture of the Cagot maiden with the snow-fields behind her.

The Cagot Maiden.

Among the snows and peaks lived this strange people. Banished from the world, almost banished from the church, they had found enough here to sustain life, generation after generation. It was possible in the summer time to give sheep and cows pasturage. It was possible even at that great height to raise beneath a summer sun enough in their gardens for their simple needs.

"Let me go to your home, let me go quickly," said Arnaud. "I am very tired."

"I know not whether my father and

mother will welcome you. We are outcasts, shunned by all. How can we feel kindly toward others? But father and mother are not like others; they are gentler, because they are old and have learned to be patient. Before we enter I must tell you my father's name and my own, for if you did not know our names you could not come under our roof. There are few to whom the Cagots tell their names, for they are as proud as those who shun them. My father's name is found for generations back in our history. It is Benaté, and mine is Sarandé. You may enter now," said the maiden, lifting the wooden latch and opening the low narrow door of the cabin.

SARANDÉ'S HOME

THE scene within was like the interior of a peasant's cottage in Béarn, except that the room was smaller and the ceiling lower. There was a large fireplace, and the old mother sat beside it, carding and spinning wool. The father was mending a rude wooden plough which he meant to use in his garden the next day. There were some children playing before the fire.

The old man and his wife looked up almost frightened when they saw a stranger enter. They feared some danger, because few ever approached the Cagot homes with a good purpose. It was indeed a startling thing to see any one not of their own race come to their firesides. The old man did not show his

Sarandé's Home.

fear however, but only surprise, while his wife looked with most curious interest upon the young artist, whose like she had never seen before beneath her humble roof.

"Sarandé," said the father, "knowest thou the name of this young man, and why he comes among the banished people who are hated and shunned by all?"

"I found him alone among the mountains. He was weary, and asked to come here to rest. He will tell thee himself why he has wandered so far. I know not, for we talked but little by the way. I could not but pity him, father, even though none pity us."

"Young man," said Benaté, "forgive this questioning about one who seems to seek a refuge among us. It is an unheard of thing. Tell me why you are here."

"You asked the maiden if she knew my name. It is Arnaud de Béarn. I am a painter, or rather I wished to be one. I have been painting in the Templars' church at Luz, and I wandered from there to find something beautiful, that I might paint it."

"What do you mean by painting, young man? I do not understand your words."

Sarandé's Home.

"Oh, father," said Sarandé, "I think I understand. You know the bright colors we have seen near the altar in the Templars' church where we looked from our chapel through the opening in the wall toward the chancel? Those must be paintings, and this young man has covered those walls with them. You know you said they were beautiful."

"Ah, yes, I remember now, but I did not know they were called paintings; and did you really make those bright colors and beautiful pictures on the walls about the altar?"

"I did make them, with the help of the painter-monk my teacher, but they are not beautiful. They are of little use. I have not learned my art, for the living secret of beauty has not fully come to me yet. I long for it and I hope for it and I seek for it. Because of that seeking I am weary. Will you give me something to eat, for I am faint?"

"Willingly, my son, but you will find poor fare here; only some milk and soup

Sarandé's Home.

can we give you. Sarandé, make ready what we have for our guest."

The maiden, nothing loath, hastened to bring some soup that was made from vegetables, and brown bread, and some milk; nay more, her interest in the weary painter made her look a little further in the scanty larder, and she found some eggs, which she cooked for him over the big fire.

Arnaud was cheered by the simple but real courtesy shown him by them all. The children whom he had seen when the door was opened, had hidden in dark corners when they saw the stranger, nor had they made a sound since he had come in. But now, when they saw him eat and drink as they did, they were sure he was not a monster, and they came nearer to him. Arnaud felt he was in a home full of love, like good homes he knew, although men shunned it and it had been forced to the mountain fastness, and almost buried in the snows just above its roof. The scene was indeed most picturesque. Even the tired eyes of the worn painter could not but see the beauty of it. There was great dignity in the white-haired man, as he sat in the firelight, doing his work

even while he talked with the stranger. There was dignity and love, too, in the woman working with the wool that others might be warm when winter came. There was the central beauty of Sarandé. All glowing and splendid she stood there with the firelight playing about her, now lighting her eyes, whose flash was more brilliant than the leaping flame, now touching her cheeks and brightening the soft richness of their color, and then bringing out with brilliant light here, and deep shadow there, the perfect lines of her form, supple and strong like those of a child of nature, whose life was amid the cliffs and the woods and by the bank of the wild torrent. And there were the children, now clustered together near the others, no longer afraid but hushed by a certain awe, a strange feeling they had not known before. They were all beautiful, with that wild, half barbaric color and expression which made Sarandé so charming, so overpowering in the effect of a beauty utterly unlike any that is seen among the usual abodes of men, but is to be sought with rarest wild-flowers in dangerous and distant places in solitude and in freedom.

Sarandé's Home.

Sarandê's Home.

Arnaud was too weary to paint, or he would have begun at once upon a picture so full of splendid color.

"Young man," said old Benaté, after they had talked a little longer, "I fear you will find your bed little better than your supper, but you are over-tired, and will sleep, I know."

Arnaud thanked them most warmly for their hospitality, and the bed, rude as it was, seemed to him that night as soft as eider down.

A TALK WITH THE CAGOT CARPENTER

ARNAUD awoke with a feeling of strangeness, not remembering for a few moments where he was, and arising, flung open the wooden shutter that he might see in the morning light the grand mountains above him. The great peaks were in the full splendor of early dawn, when sky and snow and glacier are all irradiated by the sun's first rays. Not yet was the valley in the sunlight, but the rushing stream reflected here and there the brilliant tints above, until it was lost in the depths of a great forest which had climbed up the mountains as far toward the snow as it dared to go. It seemed a wonderful, mysterious wood, and Arnaud longed to be in its shady depths and listen

A Talk with the Cagot Carpenter.

to the voices of the wind in the tree-tops and the stream among the rocks.

Truly the place of banishment the Archbishop had chosen began to seem most attractive. It was by no means a place of penance. The glowing mountains and the splendid beauty of the Cagot girl had filled Arnaud's artist-soul, and he knew that he could paint here.

Soon he sought the room with the great fireplace, and there the family had already gathered for the morning meal. Arnaud was cordially welcomed and asked to share their black bread and milk. The meal was a simple one, but the early morning air of the mountains whetted the appetite, and Arnaud ate heartily.

"Young man," said Benaté, "are you rested, and do you feel no ill effects from the great strain you went through yesterday?"

"Indeed, I feel well. The weariness has passed away. This bracing air gives me new strength and vigor. I was going to ask if you would be my guide to that great forest which begins at the end of the valley. I saw it from my window this morning, and it must be wonderfully beautiful."

"Indeed it is," said Benaté; "but I fear I cannot go with you to-day, because I have work to do. I am building a house for a farmer far down in the valley. Sarandé will guide you; she knows the woods far better than I do. You can go, can you not, my daughter?"

A Talk with the Cagot Carpenter.

"Yes, I can go," said the maiden, "if the younger ones will take care of the sheep and the cows this morning."

"We will," said the little ones, eagerly, for they were glad to do anything for the handsome stranger who had fascinated them the night before.

"I will gladly accept your guidance," said Arnaud, "and I long to see those glorious trees as quickly as we may."

"I shall soon be ready to go," said Sarandé.

"But, Benaté," said Arnaud, "you surprise me when you say you are building a house for a farmer in the valley, because both you and the maiden told me last night that you were of a banished race, and that others would have nothing to do with you. Is the farmer you speak of also a Cagot?"

"No, my son, he is not. It is true

A Talk with the Cagot Carpenter.

that we are banished and shunned by all, but we are allowed to ply our trade, because others have need of the Cagot carpenters and builders, who are the best hereabouts and do their work more cheaply than others. It is thus we earn such little money as we need. Nevertheless, even when we are working our patrons do not approach us. They hold communication with us from as far away as they can go and still have their voices heard. Thus they tell what they want. The bargain is made, and when the work is done the money is left for us at some place agreed upon."

"But, Benaté, how do they know you are Cagots when you come among them and work on their houses like others?"

"Have you noticed this upon the front of my blouse?" said the old man, pointing to a rude representation of a goose's foot made with yellow wool.

"I did indeed see it," said Arnaud, "and I wondered what it meant, and why you chose so curious an ornament."

"You could not guess what it means," said Benaté, "but I will tell you. I can speak quietly about it because I am old,

and have learned patience. It means that they think we are unclean, foul, and need more bathing than others, therefore they make us wear this badge, in a bright color which you can see from a distance, and avoid approaching us."

A Talk with the Cagot Carpenter.

"What dastardly treatment!" said Arnaud, hotly. "It is mere wanton cruelty, for surely they cannot be so utterly ignorant as not to know what you really are."

"Alas! my son, we hardly know ourselves what we really are. That is one of our greatest burdens. Our origin is lost in mystery, or at least preserved only by tradition. They say our name comes from the words 'Chiens' and 'Goths.' We may be 'Dog Goths,' the unworthy descendants of the defeated Visigoths, who lived in Spain. But some say that is not true, and claim we are children of the Saracens, whom the great king Charles Martel defeated, and there are some who say we are Jews, and that our name comes from the word 'Capo.' I think that means 'to steal,' but the Cagots are not thieves. Those that most despise us think we are really lepers, and the curse

A Talk with the Cagot Carpenter.

of Gehazi, Elisha's servant, is upon us. We know not, my son, but we do know that we are banished and called unclean. It is hard to live thus, and it is not strange that many of us are sullen and desperate, giving back hate for hate, ready to turn against our oppressors if only we were strong enough. These are the young men; those who have grown old in these mountain solitudes, have learned to love them and to be content with the simple life that is lived among them. I have talked too long, I must go now to my work."

"I thank you, Benaté, for telling me this strange tale. Let me do what I can to make your life pleasanter. I owe you much for your kindness, and would help you in any way that I could."

"I thank you," said the old man; "it is pleasure enough to have one under our roof who does not despise us, but treats us like human beings."

The old man rose, and went slowly down the road to his day's work in the valley.

ARNAUD'S FIRST PICTURE OF SARANDÉ

IT was not long before Sarandé came, ready for the walk in the woods. She had wrapped a red scarf around her luxuriant black hair; there were bright colors in her close-fitting jacket and short skirt. Her face was flushed with excitement, for never before in her life had this maiden's company been sought by any one not of her own race, and now she was to take this handsome stranger to the beautiful forest. As Arnaud looked upon her, he wondered how it was possible that the strange things the old man had just told him could be true. Surely a creature so exquisitely beautiful could not have sprung from what is unclean and leprous. Surely it could not be believed that any one would shun what had for him an overpowering charm.

Arnaud's First Picture of Sarandé.

They went into the brilliant sunshine and breathed eagerly the keen, crisp air, that was enough in itself to set the pulses leaping, even without the glorious beauty of the scene about him. They followed the road that led by the side of the stream toward the trees, which had come up as far as they dared toward the snow-circled valley. The girl was busy with her own thoughts, which were so pleasant that they made her afraid of herself, and she became shy and reserved, which was not at all her wont. Arnaud's artist-soul was full to overflowing with beauty. He could not feel at all, but only see and wonder at the ever-changing pictures of the mountains and the maiden, the stream and the trees.

Soon they entered the forest, and the pines of the Pyrenees rose about them. Sometimes the trees stood thickly together, so close that the sun could not pierce their deep green foliage, that arched over cool shady places loved by the soft moss that covered the rocks, loved too by the doves who dwelt there, and whose tender cooing made the air tremulous with love. Sometimes they stood like sentinels about some little glen, green as an emerald, with its

turf touched by the sun and watered by the rivulet that rippled through it on its way to join the river. These were the loveliest places, for the tender blue of the sky over-arched them, and far away towered up a great peak all glittering with sunlit ice and snow. The birds loved these places too, and they sang their happy love-songs among the tree branches, where their nests were. The beauty of music now added its charm to that of color and form. There were not only the gay and the tender bird-songs, but there were also the voices of the breeze as it played among the branches, — low, murmuring, caressing, and soft, like sighings of happy lovers; and there was in the distance the sound of rushing water that came from where the river was leaping among the rocks. It was a dream of beauty and passion, called forth by nature's enchanted wand.

Here Sarandé became quite herself again, for she was at home. She forgot her shyness and gave herself with utter abandon to the loveliness about her. She played among the trees as a child would. The birds were not afraid of her. Even the

Arnaud's First Picture of Sarandé.

doves fluttered about her and seemed to know that she was like one of them, a true child of nature. Arnaud thought, "God is not unkind even to these banished people. With lavish hand he spreads among them the most glorious beauties of his creation."

"Let us go a little farther," said Sarandé, gayly. "I know a little pool near the river bank that is far more beautiful even than this bright glen. Come, follow me, and catch me if you can." Laughing merrily, the girl sprang from rock to rock with the grace and agility of a chamois.

Arnaud tried in vain to keep up with her. He was almost afraid to lose sight of her, for she seemed like a bright bird, that might at any moment fly into the forest depths and be no more seen. At last she paused and looked back at the artist, who was laboring with such poor success to follow in her flying footsteps.

He reached her at last, and the girl was good enough not to laugh over-much at his clumsiness. Now they were at the edge of that pool of which Sarandé had spoken.

Truly it was more beautiful than the glen because of the added charm of the water. A part of the river, tired of always fighting with rocks, had turned aside toward the forest and sought rest among the trees. Here it made peace with the rocks, and they too were peaceful. They clothed themselves with the tenderest of green moss and came to the edge of the calm water, which gratefully caught and reflected their hues of living green. And over the rocks leaned the trees, seeking also to greet the water, and the water looked gratefully up to them and reflected their foliage, almost yellow with the vivid sunlight; and even the sky, though so far above, sought the little pool, and the trees made room for it and held back their branches a little, so that the water might see the tender blue that looked down upon it and mingle its hues with the green of the moss and the leaves. There were ferns of maiden's hair, with dew diamonds sparkling all over them, and there were flashes of color, red and yellow and blue from brilliant wild-flowers. Sarandé herself was the most brilliant flower of them all. As she

Arnaud's First Picture of Sarandé.

Arnaud's First Picture of Sarandé.

sprang from rock to rock, she seemed like a tropical bird, and the pool reflected her gay colors and mingled them with the other beautiful tones. They blended perfectly. The Cagot girl was a part of nature's picture.

Arnaud was seized with a desire to paint her there as she stood on a rock that overhung the pool. He had brought a box of colors with him, and he begged the wayward girl, who was in the mood for a frolic, to stay still where she was just for a few minutes that he might paint her. She consented after a while, and came as near as she could to standing still, for a much longer time than she liked. She became very impatient at last, and would not stay another minute, but the time had been long enough. The artist's skilful hand, inspired by this rare beauty, had caught the spirit of it. Sarandé was amazed.

"How did you do that? Why! that is my own self, and there are the trees and the moss and the sky and the ferns, and you had only that little box and a piece of paper."

"Nay, Sarandé, I had the thought of

beauty and the sight of it. Only what is beautiful makes pictures."

Arnaud's First Picture of Sarandé.

"Let us go home, for I want father and mother to see this."

"Yes, we will go, for indeed we have lingered long here in this enchanted forest, but not nearly long enough. I have only had a glimpse of its beauties. Surely we must come again, and I will paint another picture and we will stay all day long and watch the changing lights, the sun's golden gifts, each lovelier than the last, from the rosy dawn to paling twilight."

Arnaud could not have found again Benaté's home, but the girl seemed to know every tree and rock, and sure as an Indian on a trail, she led him again to the road by the river bank that led to the Cagot village.

As they entered, the old mother looked up from her knitting. She had sat there by the fireside all the morning, and a stocking nearly ready for the winter's cold bore witness to her steady toil.

"Oh, mother," said Sarandé, "has father yet come home? I have something to show him. I want you both to see it together."

Arnaud's First Picture of Sarandé.

"No, my child, he comes later, for his work is long to-day, almost as long as mine. But you, you must be very hungry, for you had not your soup at midday, and that is wrong. You took nothing with you, and you must be faint, for you have eaten nothing since early morning. Sarandé, there is still soup in the pot; heat it and eat, and the children will bring milk. They were glad to watch the cows to-day, for they knew you were happy."

Sarandé blushed and turned her head away. Well she knew why she had been happy, but she dared not confess the cause even to her own beating heart. She turned toward the fire and swung the pot over the red-hot coals. Soon the simple but wholesome meal was ready, and the two who had been wandering in dreamland were glad to partake of it, for they were tired, though they knew it not.

Then they rested awhile and talked sometimes in low tones of the beauties of the forest and the mountain, of the sparkling river, the green glen and the quiet pool and the music of the birds'

love-songs. At length the shadows began to lengthen, and they saw Benaté coming slowly and wearily up the road. The old man was glad to be refreshed with some of the hot soup, and soon he began to ask what they had done and how they had liked the wood, and whether they were weary with long wandering in it, and by many questions showed his kindly interest in all their doings. When he was quite rested, Sarandé, in triumph only half concealed, brought Arnaud's sketch and showed it to the wondering old man and to his wife, who wondered more than he did, for she did not know the bright colors on the walls of the Templars' church as well as he.

Arnaud's First Picture of Sarandé.

"So this is a picture," said Benaté. "Really it is wonderful, for there is Sarandé, and there are the trees and the rocks and the water of the pool. I know the place well, but I never thought there was any one who could thus bring such beauties again before my eyes."

"Oh, Benaté," said Arnaud, "it is only a little thing, quickly done, not worth giving you; but if you like it, please take it and put it here on the wall

near the fireplace, so that it may make you think of the poor painter whom you helped in his trouble, as you sit here and mend your tools."

Arnaud's First Picture of Sarandé.

Soon Sarandé put the sketch on the wall, and the old man and his wife looked at it and were pleased. No artist had ever before hung a picture in a Cagot cabin.

There was more pleasant and kindly talk, but the old man was weary, and at last he yielded to the warmth of the fire without and the soup within, and began to nod in his chair. His wife's knitting-needles began to lag a little and at last fell upon her lap, and she too slept in peace.

The evening came on slowly, for the twilight lingered long after the sun had gone behind the mountains. Arnaud wandered out alone to the river bank and dreamily watched the fading tints of the sunset reflected by mountain and stream.

He had heard the sound of bells coming nearer and nearer, and there was the laughter of children. The younger ones were bringing home the sheep and the cows. One had been more daring than

the others, for this was a day of adventure. *Arnaud's First Picture of Sarandé.*
He had set a net in a little pool when he went out in the morning, and as he drew it up he found some trout. How proud was he to bring them to the father and mother and the stranger! That evening they would have a good supper. They did indeed, and when it was over they did not linger long before going to seek the rest that all needed.

BENAZRA'S STORY OF THE CAGOTS

THE next day Benaté went early to his work, and Arnaud could have no further talk with him about the history of his people.

The artist's curiosity had been greatly excited by what Benaté had said, and he wished to know more about this extraordinary race who seemed to have lived for generations as they were living now, utterly proscribed and hated, and all apparently because of the blackening power of a lie which no one could or would refute.

"Sarandé," said Arnaud, after the old man had gone, "is there no one in the village who can tell me more about your people than your father told me yesterday? I want to know more about them."

"Yes," said the maiden, "there is a very old man, much older than my father, who lives in a cabin even smaller than ours on the other side of the stream. He is quite alone, and too old to leave his home. Indeed, he is almost helpless, and the neighbors have to take care of him; but he is very wise, — oh, so wise! Some call him a wizard, because they think he knows more than a mere man ought to know. The children are afraid of him. I never dared go near his cabin when I was little. Even now I am half afraid."

Benazra's Story of the Cagots.

"Do not be afraid, Sarandé, for you know there can be nothing to fear; but take me to him, for I would talk with him."

"Yes, I will take you there, but I cannot tell why you wish to know so much about us poor Cagots. Nobody ever cared before, or even thought about us except to be sure we never came near them."

"That must be because they never saw you, or your father or your mother. Take me to your wizard's cabin, Sarandé. Will you go now?"

"I am ready," said the maiden.

Benazra's Story of the Cagots.

They left Benaté's home and walked among the cabins, which were clustered quite closely together along the bank of the stream, until they came to a little bridge rudely made of tree-trunks and planks roughly hewn, which reached from the bank to a rock in the middle of the river, and thence to the other side. The frail structure swayed a little in the wind that came from the rushing water, and they were wet with the spray from a foaming cataract not far from the bridge. Nevertheless, they came safely across, and Sarandé laughed as she shook the drops from her hair, and leapt from rock to rock up the steep bank, until they found the path that led to the cabins on the other shore. There were not so many of these, and some were quite far up on the mountain side. The farthest away of all was that of the wizard. This seemed so lonesome that it was no wonder the children would not go there, even if they had not feared the wizard himself.

They came at last to the low door of the cabin. In spite of the boasting that she was not afraid, now that she was no longer little, Sarandé hesitated before she

knocked, and she might have run away if she had not been ashamed because Arnaud was there. With flushed cheeks and eyes brightly defiant of her fears she knocked on the door. A low voice answered, "Enter," and they stood within Benazra's home.

Benazra's Story of the Cagots.

Before the fire and very near to it, was seated a man of great age. His snow-white hair fell upon his shoulders. His shaggy eyebrows overarched black, piercing eyes, that seemed to retain still much of the fire of youth. His aquiline nose and prominent cheek-bones and his very dark skin clearly betokened one of the children of the Moor. His hands were still clasped upon a knotty stick, on which he had been leaning forward from his chair and looking into the fire, until he had raised his head at the sound of the knocking and turned it toward the door to see who was coming.

"Who comes to see Benazra?" he said.

"It is I, Sarandé, the daughter of Benaté, and I bring Arnaud de Béarn, who wishes to talk with thee," said the maiden, timidly.

Benazra's Story of the Cagots.

"Ye are welcome. Benaté I know, and I also remember thee, Sarandé; but why dost thou bring the young man?"

"He will tell thee himself. Speak to him, Arnaud."

"Benazra, I have come because I wish to know more of your people. I was a wanderer exiled among your mountains, and Sarandé and Benaté have been kind to me when I was weary and faint with hunger. I had not thought to find such kindness among the Cagots, and at first Sarandé herself did not wish me to follow her, because she said she and her people were called lepers. I see that this cannot be true. Will you tell me why such cruel things are said of you?"

"Has not Benaté told thee, young man?"

"He has told me much, but I want to know more."

"Ah, yes, I see. They think old Benazra knows more than they, and that is true, for when I was young I tried to find the truth among the many traditions of our people. I think I found it, and even in my old age I have not forgotten it. You wish to know why we are called

lepers. It is a long story, but I will tell you if you will sit by the fire, for it is always cold here, and it is lonesome. The fire is warm and cheerful."

Benazra's Story of the Cagots.

They found some rude chairs and drew them near to the old man. Sarandé sat on one side, Arnaud on the other, while he told his tale.

"We are called lepers because the curse of Gehazi is thought to rest upon us. You remember that when Naaman the Syrian came to Elisha and was cured of his leprosy, the prophet's servant Gehazi followed Naaman, seeking the reward which Elisha would not take. Therefore it was said the leprosy of Naaman clave to Gehazi and his seed and was never to depart from them. Now, Damascus in Syria, where Naaman dwelt, was the chief city of the great Sultan, and it was from there that he sent forth his armies when they went out to conquer Africa, and afterward Spain. The story of Naaman's leprosy, which had fallen upon Gehazi, was never forgotten, and all people believed that the Moslems who came from Syria, warriors of renown, conquerors though they were, were tainted with lep-

Benazra's Story of the Cagots.

rosy, and there was great fear of them because of this as well as on account of their valor. Now, when Spain was subdued, the ambition of the Saracen knew no bounds and he thought to overcome all Europe. Therefore Abdirama led his hosts against France. They took possession of all the passes of the Pyrenees and spread themselves over the land; but Charles Martel defeated them, and they were driven before him like chaff before the wind. Not all came back to Spain. Many remained here, scattered among these mountains. They were hated by the people, and there was talk of killing them all; but at last it was decided that they might live if they would become Christians. This they did, and after probation as catechumens they were baptized. These Saracens who had become Christians were known in Navarre and Béarn as long ago as the year 1000 after Christ, and they have lived here ever since."

The old man paused a moment, and his eyes flashed fire as he thought of the injustice that had been done to his race.

Arnaud said, "But, Benazra, I cannot understand why the people could not see

that you were not lepers when you came and dwelt among them and were baptized into their church."

Benazra's Story of the Cagots.

"Young man, you little know the power of prejudice. Nothing could make them believe there was not a taint of leprosy about Saracens. In many places they even called them Gezitains, which name comes from Gehazi. Nor was it true that the people ever knew much about us, for the catechumens who are preparing for baptism are separated from baptized Christians. This separation endured with us even after baptism, partly because of the hate of the Saracens, and partly on account of the invincible fear of the taint of leprosy. Therefore they would not come near us, and they even made laws which forbade us to mix with them. Once it was ordained that we should not walk barefooted on the street, and if we did not obey, our feet were to be pierced with a hot iron."

"I understand, Benazra," said Arnaud. "Yet I remember that Benaté said he was not sure your people were Saracens. He said that some called you 'Chiens Goths,' and that your name of Cagots came from this."

Benazra's Story of the Cagots.

"That could not be," said Benazra. "The Goths were a noble race. There was never any taint of leprosy about them. The Saracens may have been called 'dogs' or 'chasers' of Goths in derision, because they had boasted they would drive the Goths before them, and instead had been defeated themselves. Besides, it is well known that the term 'Cagot' is one expressing insult and contempt, and might well be used by an insolent conqueror toward the foe whom he had crushed."

"Benaté also said that some thought you were Jews," said Arnaud.

"Alas! it is true that many have thought so and think so still, and because of that suspicion horrible crimes have been attributed to us, which we never dreamed of committing; but there is no truth in it. In the laws of Charles the Bald some Jews were called 'Capi,' which is a word that comes from the name of the sparrow-hawk, and was applied to them because they were usurers and thieves, and seized everything within their reach. From the similarity between 'Capi' and 'Cagots' came the idea that we were Jews. The ignorant people in their hatred would believe

every evil thing that could be said of us. Thus they have always treated us. Ah! would that we were strong enough! Gladly would old Benazra teach them how to avenge themselves."

Benazra's Story of the Cagots.

Again the old man's eyes flashed. Patience had not come to him in his age, as it had to Benaté. Long had he brooded alone over the wrongs of his race, and the passion for vengeance even now blazed so strongly within him that he rose from his chair, and trembling with excitement, shook his knotted stick in wrath, as though he would strike a foe. Sarandé was terrified, and shrank away from him; but she was soon reassured, for in a moment he sank back in his chair, utterly exhausted. It seemed as if he would faint, but his brave spirit soon nerved him again, and he said as calmly as before: —

"What I have told you is true. Can you look at Sarandé and doubt it? Surely you can see that she is a child of the South. The blood of the Moors is in her veins. And what do you think of me? Am I a Goth or a Jew? Oh! why do they not understand?"

Benazra's Story of the Cagots.

Arnaud looked upon them both. Their ancestry was written in their faces. In the old man was the fire of Saladin. In the maiden was the sensuous charm of one of Mohammed's houris. It was true, Saracens they were, though baptized, both of them, in the Christian church.

But now the old man's strength was quite gone. Even the excitement of his passionate wrath could sustain him no longer. He sank back again in his chair, and his knotted stick fell upon the floor. Sarandé feared he would die, and she was greatly terrified. Not for worlds would she have been near the wizard when he died, for there were fearful stories whispered about, that the devil would come for his soul, which had been sold to Satan for the supernatural wisdom he had given Benazra. Even now the king of evil might be near. With trembling steps she sought the door, nor could Arnaud restrain her. Her fears were not to be quieted, and she could hardly breathe until she was in the open air. Arnaud followed her and tried to reassure her, and at last he succeeded in so far that

she became calm again, but nothing would induce her to re-enter the cabin.

Benazra's Story of the Cagots.

"Wait for me here then," said he. "I cannot leave the old man thus. He is not dead, I think, only exhausted and fainting. I must revive him."

"Oh, Arnaud, do not go back there. It is an unholy place. Would that we had not entered his home! Evil may come to you unless you flee from the devil. He may be there even now."

"I am not afraid. The poor old man has gone beyond his strength in doing me a service. I must help him as best I can."

Arnaud re-entered the cabin. The old man still lay there motionless, with closed eyes, and his face was weirder even than before as the flickering lights and shadows from the fire played over its stern and rugged outlines. There was some wine in a jug on the table. Arnaud moistened the closed lips with this and bathed the forehead with cool water. At last Benazra opened his eyes, and it was not long before he was quite conscious again; but he did not seem to remember what had happened, and sat there looking into the

fire just as he had been doing when they came.

Arnaud rejoined Sarandé, who welcomed him with a cry of joy, for she had feared the devil might take him too, when he came for Benazra's soul. They found the neighbor who took care of the old man and sent her to the cabin to see if he needed anything, and they went slowly back to Benaté's home.

THE CAGOTS' GOOD-FRIDAY

NOT many days after the visit to Benazra they were all talking together in the evening as they sat around the great fire.

"To-morrow," said Benaté, "will be Good Friday, and we must go to the Templars' church. I know not whether you would care to go there with us, you who have painted its walls so beautifully."

"Yes, father," said Arnaud, eagerly, "I will go."

"Listen, my son," Benaté said. "It is my duty to tell you yet more of our painful story. When I talked with you about it before, I did not say that there are those who think there is a bad odor about us that can only be removed by Christian baptism. They have a most horrible

The Cagots' Good Friday.

thought about it, which comes from their belief that we are Jews; for they say that a baptism in the blood of Christian children killed on Good Friday will remove this taint from us, and that therefore we seek such blood on Good Friday, as the Jews have been known to do. Ah, God! Ah, Saviour! that such hideous things should be said of us! For this reason we are hated and shunned on Good Friday more than on any other day. Nevertheless, we must go to the Templars' church, because it is a tradition of our race, a sacred one. We dare not disobey the teaching of our unwritten but binding law. But, young man, you need not go with us. There is no need. I warn you there is danger in so doing."

"Is Sarandé going with you?" said Arnaud.

"Yes, my son, she must go."

"And is your wife going also, old and feeble as she is?"

"She must go, Arnaud, as long as she is able to walk."

"And you think that I should be afraid to go where a maiden and a weak old woman are going! I fear you think but

little of my courage. I should be far less than a man if I feared to go with them. I will go where Sarandé goes, and I will protect her in danger, if danger there is, so far as I may. When do you leave here?"

The Cagots' Good Friday.

"Very early in the morning, for the walk is a long one, and we must go by little paths among the woods and rocks, for on that day the high-road is utterly forbidden to us."

"I shall be ready," said the young man.

Sarandé had been sitting in a dark corner, shuddering while her father told Arnaud of this Good Friday horror, the darkest of all the evil things that were told and believed about her race. Nevertheless, there was no fear in her, and if there had been, it would have vanished when she heard Arnaud's words and knew that he wished to care for her, if she were in danger or trouble.

On the morrow, very early, the Cagots began gathering before Benaté's house, for he was the patriarch of the village. The old and young, even the lame and the feeble ones who could walk at all, were there. They were clad in sombre garb,

The Cagots' Good Friday.

for it was their day of sadness and humiliation. If there had been Jewish blood in them they would not have thus kept Good Friday. Slowly and silently they went forth in a long procession, following a little winding path that led among the woods and the rocks down through the valley and then up the steep hill, on whose crest stood the church of the Templars at Luz. It was a weary walk and a sad one. The old and the feeble were well-nigh exhausted when they reached the ramparts that surrounded the church. On hands and knees they crawled through a low opening in the wall, which was their only entrance to God's house, and passing the little court-yard where lay the bones of many a dead Templar, they entered by a small door the little chapel that was set apart for the use of these despised ones. Here they knelt in silence on the stone floor and prayed. One after another in turn they rose and looked through the little opening in the wall of the choir, through which could be seen the high altar, now draped in deepest black, and the bier of Christ before it with its black pall, all lighted by the candles

alone, for black curtains shut out the light from the windows. The solemn service went on. The priests chanted, the Templars responded. The candles were extinguished until there was light only on the altar. The Cagots did not dare join in the worship. They were not to lift their voices in praise or prayer in this church of Christ. They were to think it a great boon that they could come in silence and secrecy as near to the altar as was their dark chapel. At length the service was over. The Templars, in their black robes with a white cross upon each, went slowly forth and sought their cells. The priests remained long kneeling in the darkness in silent prayer.

The Cagots' Good Friday.

The Cagots went slowly out, and crossing once more the court-yard, crawled again through the hole in the rampart and sought the steep and narrow path that led down to the valley. They thought they had escaped notice, but alas! it was not so. There were some boys playing on the rocks above them. Suddenly there was a cry, "Ah, see! Ah, see! There are the monsters! Oh, they would kill us! It is Good Friday, they

The Cagots' Good Friday.

want our blood! They will come and kill us!" The children ran shrieking toward their homes. Their parents thought at once the Cagots had attacked them, perhaps killed some of them that they might have their blood baptism. Infuriated, they caught up stones and rushed to the edge of the precipice above the path along which the Cagots were moving slowly. With the strength of madmen, they hurled the stones, and they rolled rocks down the steep hillside. The frightened Cagots fled as well as they could, seeking shelter among trees and behind rocks, but many were grievously hurt before they could find a refuge. Their supposed uncleanness was really their best protection, for the angry people dared not come near them for fear of contagion.

Arnaud was protecting Sarandé as well as he might, putting himself between her and the flying stones. Some struck him, but he cared not so long as she was unhurt. Suddenly she reeled and nearly fell. A stone had struck her in the cheek. In a moment she was faint and bleeding, and she would have fallen from the path and down the steep and rocky hillside,

had not Arnaud caught her in his arms. Scarce conscious of the weight he was bearing, he rushed along the path until he came to the shelter of the wood. There the stones could not reach them. There were no pursuers, and he could rest a moment. Sarandé had fainted. He must carry her to the river. It was not far. There he could bathe her bleeding wound, and the cold water would bring her back to life again.

The Cagots' Good Friday.

The strong man had need of all his strength before he reached the river bank and gently laid the maiden, still unconscious, on the grass, while he went to get water. Sarandé was not badly hurt. The cold water soon revived her. She began to breathe naturally, and at last sat up and looked about her with bewildered eyes.

"Where am I? Ah, I know, those devils nearly killed me. It was you who brought me here. You have saved my life. I wonder if I have strength to get home. It is a weary way."

"I will help you," said Arnaud; "take courage."

The strength of this maiden of the mountains began to come back to her.

She rose to her feet, but Arnaud had to support her or she would have fallen. He feared she would not be able to reach her home without more help than he could give alone. None of the other Cagots was in sight. Each had protected himself as well as he could, and those who were unhurt were now far on their way toward their own village.

Arnaud nerved himself for a great effort, for he knew that without his support the girl, brave as she was, could never reach her home. He put his arm around her and she leaned her head on his shoulder. Thus he half carried her over the steep parts of the path. Several times she almost fell, but her strong will overcame the faintness, and she went on. She even began to step with a firmer tread, but still she did not lift her head and still his arm was around her. Thus they went through the paths of the wood. At last the strength of the man and the bravery of the girl were rewarded. The home was in sight. They would soon reach it now. They struggled along with renewed courage, and with nearly all the power he had left, Arnaud opened the

cabin door and bore Sarandé within, laid her down on the floor, put a pillow under her head and then sank down himself, utterly exhausted by the long strain upon muscle and nerve. The reaction was so great that for a long time neither was conscious of anything, save that the struggle was over and they were safe. They did not even know that the cabin was empty. Neither Benaté nor his wife nor the children had come home. Arnaud at last overcame his weakness, but Sarandé lay perfectly still. She was too weary to move, but she asked for food. There were some embers still in the fireplace, and there was soup in the pot. In a little while Arnaud made the fire and prepared some food. Both partook of it, and were soon warmed and strengthened. But where were Benaté and the old mother? Arnaud thought both must have been killed by the stones or overcome by fear of the murderous mob. This was not true. Benaté knew the mountains well, and he knew the danger when he heard the first angry cry of the boys. Without the loss of a moment, he pushed on with his wife and children toward a great

rock near the edge of the wood. Thanks to his quick action they reached the shelter in time to escape the flying stones, but Sarandé was not with them, nor was the artist. Benaté waited until the storm of stones ceased, and then he went back to seek his daughter. Some of the Cagots had been killed. Their bodies lay in the path. The wounded had crept away toward the forest.

Trembling and sick at heart the old man looked among the dead, but his daughter's body was not there. He searched long, but could find no trace of her, and at last in despair he returned to his wife and little ones. With slow steps they went along the path, and at last, utterly wearied and sick at heart, they entered their cabin. The joy of seeing their daughter there safe, though wounded, and the artist too, unhurt though pale and weary, was so great that Benaté for a moment almost forgot the terrors of this fearful day. The first care of the mother was for Sarandé's wound. She dressed it skilfully and quickly, and was glad to find it was not severe.

ARNAUD'S TEMPTATION



HE gratitude of the old people to Arnaud was unbounded, and from that time they felt for him a tender affection, almost as they would feel for a son of their own. After a few days of quiet, Sarandé's wound was healed and the maiden was herself again; but it was not with her as it had been in the time before Arnaud came. She had begun to love him before, though she was only half conscious of it. Now she knew that even in her faintness her heart beat more quickly as she felt his arm about her and let her head rest on his shoulder. She could no longer conceal her passion from herself, nor did she care to do so. She gloried in it, but she would not let him know it. Arnaud might have seen

Arnaud's Temptation.

that she loved him, unless he had been so utterly absorbed in his passion for beauty. He knew the loveliness of Sarandé's form, the rich beauty of her face, and he was fascinated by her charm; but he did not love her, he loved only her beauty. Nevertheless, he was in great danger, for to an artist the spell that is put upon the senses by such beauty as hers is almost as potent as love itself, and may lead to the veriest madness of passion. Arnaud should have seen his danger, but he did not or would not. There was a fascination in painting this wild girl of the mountains such as he had never known before.

Picture after picture he painted. He could not resist the temptation to seek ever new lines of grace in the supple rounded form, new brilliance of color in the flashing eyes and rosy cheeks, new meaning in the mobile face yielding to each emotion as the wheat sways in the breeze, darkens in the flying cloud-shadow, or gleams brightly in the yellow sunlight. All nature was changed and made more beautiful to him by the beauty of this child of nature.

Weeks and months passed on, and Arnaud still lingered. Sarandé seemed never to tire while Arnaud painted her, but her heart was tired. He spoke no word of love, and passionate admiration was not enough for her ardent nature.

Arnaud's Temptation.

One day she had sat for him a long time. Never had she been so beautiful as that afternoon, when the sunset brilliance irradiated her face and form as it did the mountains above her.

"Oh, Arnaud," she said at last, "I am tired, I am tired. Why do you not see? Oh! will you never see that I am sick at heart? You are hard and cruel; you care only for art and you love my beauty. I am not all beauty. I am a woman, I have a heart. Even poor Cagot girls have hearts. Oh! can we not be happy together?" she cried, with a passionate sob. She rose and came toward him, trembling with the passion that had overcome her.

Like a lightning flash came the truth to Arnaud. He had trifled with this girl. His art had tempted him and he had yielded; nor was it only his art, for he knew he was not insensible to those

Arnaud's Temptation.

charms he had so often painted. There was a fierce struggle in his mind. The dazzling beauty was before him, offered to him, but between him and the maiden rose two pictures: the old grandmother sitting by the fire with her Bible on her knees, and Angela with her pure blue eyes and golden crown of hair standing like a madonna in the field of the poppies.

"Oh, Sarandé, forgive me! I have been wicked, heartless, selfish. I have hurt you, but I did not mean to do you harm. I will not hurt you more. I must leave you. It is not well for either of us that I should stay another minute."

"Leave me! you cannot, you dare not! You will kill me. Why did you save my life? Why did you love my beauty? You shall not go. I will follow you."

"It cannot be. Would that I had gone before! I am hardly strong enough to go now, but I will go. I must go. Forgive me, forgive me! My own heart is breaking, for I have sinned, because I have hurt an innocent living soul that trusted me."

"You shall not go, I will keep you here!" She knelt before him and begged that he would not take away the light of her life and leave her to die. The passion of this wild girl rushed forth in pleading words, in streaming tears. Like a whirlwind of the tropics her love swept over her, and it nearly swept away the artist too, but he did not yield. He left her there faint and exhausted, and rushed to the fireside where Benaté and his wife were sitting.

Arnaud's Temptation.

"Oh, father! Oh, mother! I have done you wrong, for Sarandé loves me. I knew it not till now. She is stainless, but I must go away. I have been selfish, wicked. I did not see. I was blinded by her beauty. Oh, take care of her. She will not hate me when I am gone. She will be glad that her beauty was dear to me. Forgive me. Let me go now. I thank you for all you have done for me. Forget me as soon as you can, and only remember that I loved you all. Take care of Sarandé."

THE STORM AND THE CAVE



RNAUD rushed away from the Cagot cabin as quickly as he could. There was a long path before him. He was among the highest peaks of the Pyrenees, but that mattered not. He would go. His life or death was not the question. The question was how to save the beautiful Cagot maiden from harm. Down through the valley he ran. It was a stormy evening. Great clouds had come over the mountains. He could hardly find his way, nor indeed could he see anything. The beauty with which he had been in such close contact made his head reel; but he was firm. He had overcome the temptation. The Cagot girl was unharmed. What should he do now in that

dark mountain-pass with the lightning about him and the thunder echoing from peak to peak? Nothing, except to get far away. Let the lightning flash. Let the thunder roar. It would be better to die there innocent than to have done what never could be undone.

The Storm and the Cave.

Blind from the black storm without, blinder yet from the storm within, he wandered down the path. Nothing but instinct could have shown him the way. He had the instinct, for he was born among these Pyrenees. After long hours of weary walking he was again in the valley, and a lightning flash revealed the Templars' church.

"Am I to go there again?" he said. "I cannot do it. My life is changed. I can no longer paint there in the old simple stupid way, as the monk painted. I must go somewhere else. Where shall I go, what shall I do?" He wandered on aimlessly, really retracing his footsteps, but now no longer able to see where he was going, for the storm was worse than before.

Now it was hardly possible to walk. Even his instinct could not guide him,

The Storm and the Cave.

for there was only blackness and lurid lightning and deafening thunder. At times in the lightning flash he saw the peaks above him. They seemed purple and red and yellow, mysterious, as if in another world. Surely he had never seen them before. They might have been a part of the walls of the heavenly city when the lightning flash revealed them. The thunder rolling from peak to peak might have been Gabriel's trumpet, calling to the day of judgment.

Was this the judgment upon him for what came so near to being a sin with the Cagot girl? Surely it could not be that. He had resisted, he had fled; but his head reeled in the storm of passionate temptation and the tremendous storm above him. He sank down exhausted, and thought that his last hour had come.

And now the danger came from beneath as well as above. The storm-lashed torrent was coming closer and closer to the road. At last it touched Arnaud, where he lay in a sort of stupor. He would have died had it not been for the touch of this icy water. The shock was so overpowering that he started to his

feet again. He put his hand to his head, still half stunned, still utterly bewildered.

The Storm and the Cave.

"Ah, this must be the place where the hermit's cave was. Angela was here with me. Where is Angela? Ah, I know. Surely that is the fire by the convent. No, it is the lightning. Will that thunder crash throw down the solid cliffs? I care not. If the cliffs do not crush me the rushing torrents will sweep me away. Where am I? It must be that I went up this bank to the hermit's cave, and Angela stood here, just here, in the road. This must be the road. I cannot see it. I can hardly feel it, for the water covers it even now. Ah! that purple flash. I see, I see; yes, it was here. Angela! Angela! art thou there below? Come hither, come hither. The waters still rise. It is dark, and the rocks themselves are trembling beneath the thunder's crash. Thou wilt be swept away by the torrent. Ah! no, it was the fire that threatened thee. There it is again. Ah, God, let it not touch the place where she is! Will it never stop? There will be no more light. The earth is a sea of roaring waters. Ah! there is a light that

The Storm and the Cave.

seems steady. My brain reels, but I think it is the light. Where is it? Perhaps in the sky. No, it is not a star. Ah, it may be the hermit's light in his cave. God grant me strength and sight to climb to it."

Dazed, almost delirious from emotion and exhaustion, drenched by the rain and the torrent, chilled by the wind, which howled through the gorge, and blinded by the lurid lightning, which blazed incessantly, nevertheless there was enough strength left in Arnaud to enable him slowly to climb the mountain side.

The light seemed to come nearer. Only dimly could he see it, but it seemed the beacon of safety. It gave him courage. Light in the blackness only made more black after the lightning's flash — that was a hope, a possibility of life. He crawled toward it with all that was left of strength within him. He reached it at last, and the hermit saw him and wondered how a human being could have lived through such a storm in the gorge of Gavarnie.

The anchorite came toward him with the light. Arnaud was again nearly unconscious, but he had strength enough

left to walk a few steps, with the hermit's help. They came to the opening of the cave, a cleft in the rocks scarcely large enough to enter unless on hands and knees; but the hermit dragged the helpless body of Arnaud through this narrow door, and they were sheltered from the storm. He took a torch from the wall. There were many of them, for they were needed always in the blackness of the cave.

The Storm and the Cave.

The bright blaze of the torch seemed to re-awaken Arnaud's nearly spent powers, and there was no more rain, no more torrents, no icy water freezing him. There was no more temptation. No Cagot girl could be here in this mysterious cave. Surely the hermit who had met Angela and himself that fateful morning was by his side, unless he was still delirious and saw nothing truly. At last he was able to stand, and the hermit said, "Come with me, I will help you where the path is dangerous."

Arnaud could walk now, but his step was not firm nor was his head steady. The path was cut out of the solid rock, and it was not more than two feet in

The Storm and the Cave.

width. Below were vast abysses of darkness from whose depths came the sound of rushing waters. A misstep would be fatal. A dizziness came over the painter, and he would surely have fallen had not the hermit grasped him firmly by the arm. Even then he was not able to go farther. He was overcome by weakness and vertigo.

"Lie down, I will take you to the cave."

Arnaud lay helplessly on the narrow path. The old man held the torch in his left hand. He passed his right arm around Arnaud's shoulder and dragged him along the narrow slippery way until the dangerous points were passed.

They were now in a place of some prehistoric race. Here were great columns, and from the vaulted ceiling other columns seemed coming to join those below. There were passages in all directions leading to still deeper depths. Only their openings could be discerned by the light of the torch. It seemed such a place as Milton described when he told of the council of Lucifer and his angels, after their fall from heaven.

Arnaud still lay helpless, but he was in a safe place. The hermit went toward the centre of the great cave and kindled a fire. There were rude seats of stone about it made by the natural inequalities of the rock, and there were torches placed in sockets here and there. All these the anchorite lighted. Now the central part of this vast columned hall was illuminated, but that only made the blackness of the outreaching passages and the spaces behind the columns darker, more weird and mysterious than before. The water kept rushing along at an unknown depth, and the sound of it was like that of distant thunder.

The Storm and the Cave.

Arnaud came to himself after a long time — many hours — during whose slow passage the hermit anxiously watched him. At last his eyes opened upon this tremendous, most mysterious cave. It could not be the world in which he had lived before. It was more peaceful than the tempest which had nearly killed him, but it was even more awful. The glittering columns, the blackness of the half disclosed passages leading to other halls perhaps as great as this room, fit for the

gods, in which he lay, the flickering shadows on the vaulted roof— Where was he? Perhaps in a cathedral. It seemed like the Templars' church, but a thousand times greater in size. What was this continual sound of the surging of the deep waters? Perhaps it was the organ tone. But there was the voice of the hermit who said, "My son, God hath saved thy life." It hardly seemed like a human voice. Arnaud did not know what it was. He was not yet master of himself. Slowly, slowly he recovered consciousness. The old man gave him a hot drink made from the herbs of the mountains. He sat by the fire refreshed, comforted, but still bewildered by the wonderful, mysterious cave.

At times his brain would reel, and he would think himself in some place not at all of earth. Then he would look at the hermit and wonder whether he really was a man. Then he would hear the rushing of the water below, and wonder if that was the river Styx, and that his time had come for Charon to take him in his boat. He was still half delirious, but he was slowly becoming more calm. The hermit's

herbs were having their effect, and at last the wandering of the mind ceased for a moment and Arnaud seemed almost himself again for a little time, though greatly weakened by his fearful trials.

The Storm and the Cave.

"Let us sleep," said the old man. "The fire will warm us. There is no more rain, no howling wind, no crash of thunder. It is peaceful. Here is straw for your bed. Be calm, nothing can harm you here. The lightning cannot reach you, and God's own mountain is your roof. Sleep peacefully, my son, and you will be strong again in the morning."

Arnaud slept not only until the morning but for hours afterward. His strength was spent. He cared not whether his bed was of straw or down. The mysterious passages leading from the vast columned cave were forgotten. Sleep — sleep — sleep — nature almost outdone in endurance needed rest. It was this rest that stayed the hand of death. Arnaud was to live yet a little longer on this earth. His mission was not yet fulfilled, but he had come close to the brink of that stream which can only once be crossed.

He lingered in his lethargy. The her-

The Storm and the Cave.

mit feared he might never awake, but he sat by him day and night, and he gave to him, as well as he could to a man unconscious, some of the simple remedies which he made from the herbs he found in the wood. On the second day there were signs of returning vitality. The heart beat more strongly. The respiration was more natural. When the old man saw that this change had come, he was greatly rejoiced, and felt sure that complete recovery would soon follow. But Arnaud was still so weak that he could not raise head or hand. Nevertheless, the spirit of life had come back to him. In a little while he would be himself again.

ARNAUD'S CONFESSION



UT it was longer than the hermit thought before Arnaud fully recovered. Many days passed before his mind was quite sound again. Hunaud was sorely puzzled by this, for the physical shock alone, severe as that had been, was not enough to account for such prolonged mental weakness. The strain of the temptation and the struggle had been as severe as that of the storm. Moreover, the cave wherein Arnaud lay was so strange a place that it seemed unreal, and even a man in full possession of his faculties might there easily think he was dreaming.

At last he remembered the storm and his wanderings through the gorge, after his flight from the Cagot cabin, and he

Arnaud's Confession.

recalled with shame the reason why he had so suddenly gone from the beautiful maiden of the mountain and the forest.

"Father," said he, "dost thou know how I came hither?"

"Nay, my son, I know nothing save that I found thee on the mountain side struggling toward the entrance of my cave, where I stood with my light. Even here some sound of the fearful tempest had come, and I thought to go forth to see if haply some poor wanderer had been overcome by the storm and might need help from me. Such warnings I have had before, and I needs must heed them, for they never come to me unless there is need. I found thee and I brought thee hither. I knew thee not at first, but afterward I remembered thee well, and the more readily because once before I was warned to leave this cave in search of thee, but more to seek a maiden who was with thee, for thou art he who came hither with Angela, the lovely maiden who was to wed the King. My son, tell me if thy strange coming hither has aught to do with her whose sad fate wrung my heart, even though it was laid

upon me to tell her of the ruin of what she had wished."

Arnaud's Confession.

"Oh, no! I came not here because of Angela. I have not seen her since that fearful day when she came near to dying in the angry flames that threatened the holy home she had built for herself and others whose lives the Pope's decree had blasted as it had her own. Knowest thou aught of her, father? Is she well? Does she still dwell in that lonely, grim prison where she said she awaited death?"

"I cannot tell thee. I have not seen her, nor have I heard aught of her since that day in the church, when her father bore her in his arms from the altar that was to witness her bridal vows. Yet there is something in me which seems to say she will not stay always in that living tomb. Surely she is not as those who had been wedded. My warning came ere it was too late, though in her despair and shame it seemed to her that all was over for her in this life, and only in the other could she have any hope. But, my son, thou dost start up eagerly. Thou thinkest I am giving thee hope that thou mayest see her. Do not

Arnaud's Confession.

mistake me. I know nothing more than what I have said."

"But, father — "

"Nay, do not interrupt me. I will not speak of Angela since I know thou camest not hither because of her. I feared thou didst cherish for her an unruly passion which might work her ill. I thought I saw it burning in thy eyes. But thou hast not seen her save as thou sayest. It is well. But thou hast seen some one else then, who has touched thee with some strong emotion that has stirred thee to the very depths. I know it from thy long delirium. Thou art too young and strong to be thus overwhelmed by the tempest alone. It is a storm within that has shaken thee thus. Tell me, my son, what is it that thou hast done which has so nearly unseated thy reason."

"Thou hast no right to ask me. I would thou wert a priest, for then I might confess to thee, but thou art not a priest but only a hermit. Perhaps thou art a magician. Hast thou made this place of ill omen to hide thee from the world? Even now I know not, when I dare to look about me, whether I am alive or in

some fearful place of darkness far from the light of the earth. I fear thee. I cannot trust thee. Thou wouldst destroy all happiness, and bury all earthly joys in this mysterious cavern. Ah! would thou wert a priest! Then would I tell thee all. I would confess to thee and receive from thee absolution, and I would ask thy guidance."

Arnaud's Confession.

"Wouldst thou indeed confess? I thank God for that word. It is thy troubled brain which makes thee fear me, or fear this place. I am called Hunaud the Hermit, but I am a priest, yes, more than that. I was so near to the Pope himself that he gave me all honor and place within his power. But I sinned. My sin was worse than thou or any other mortal can have to tell me, and because of it, self banished, I buried myself here that I might repent, for I might not take my life, nor did I dare die until I knew my sin was washed out in the blood of Christ. Fear not to confess to me, my son, for God has wrought repentance in me, nor has he taken from me the power to give thee absolution and comfort, if thou too hast sinned. For this and all

Arnaud's Confession.

else of power to help that he has left me, blessed be his holy name. Speak without fear, and ease thy soul of its burden."

"I will obey thee, my father, for my heart tells me thy words are true. I must have comfort, peace, and above all guidance. I will tell thee all. The Archbishop told me to leave Angela's retreat by the river and go far away among the mountains where I could not see her. He thought, as you do, that my heart was not right toward her. I went as he said, and in the mountains I met a maiden and she was beautiful. I wanted to paint her. Dost thou know that I am a painter and long to be an artist?"

"Nay, I did not know that, but what has that to do with the sin thou wouldst confess?"

"Ah, I feared thou couldst not understand. None but artists can know the power of a passion for beauty. Thou canst not think that a painter would be willing to sell his soul if only he could see and keep forever those visions of loveliness which float before him in dreams, but elude him always. God made him so.

Did not God himself make all things beautiful? Only man has marred them. But if an artist's visions, seen in dreams, seem real before his waking eye — father! surely thou must feel how eagerly he would seek to seize the essence of such beauty and keep it in his art that others too might see it."

Arnaud's Confession.

"I see, indeed, that beauty such as thou dost speak of might well have greater power over one whose nature God has filled with the love of beauty, but I see not why there should be deadly sin in this — such sin as has troubled thy very soul, unless indeed thou hast made a god of this beauty and worshipped it, forgetting all besides. Perhaps this is thy sin?"

"That may be true. Perhaps indeed the mischief has come from this. But there is more to tell. There is beauty in the sky and the mountains, there is beauty in the field and flower; but the beauty of all beauties is the living beauty of woman. I knew it not in the church nor on the mountain-tops nor in the gorges, but when I saw it, it carried me away, nor could I take my eyes from it. It is

Arnaud's Confession.

because it lives — it lives. It throbs and pulsates. It has forms and hues that change every instant, yet all are lovely. Why, then, if God made it, should evil come from the love of it? I cannot see, I cannot see, but I know there is evil there, and from the evil in the Cagot girl I fled into the storm."

"The Cagot girl! Thou hast said naught of that accursed race," said the hermit, crossing himself. "Surely thou art in deadly sin if aught has passed between thee and one of those condemned alike by God and man. Dogs, heretics, lepers, may God have mercy on thy soul if thou hast touched that which is unclean!"

"Say no evil of her, father, nor of those about her. Thou knowest her not, and thou knowest not them. I was among them and they loved me, nor have any ever treated me more kindly."

"This is a delusion of the enemy," said the hermit, once more crossing himself. "Surely the very spirit of evil has possessed thee if thou hast loved to dwell among the accursed."

"It may be as thou sayest. I know there was evil there and I fled from it, but

I think it was more in my heart than in hers. If she sinned it was in ignorance, but I — I was blinded by my selfish love of beauty, and I thought not of aught beside. Ah! if thou hadst seen her as I have seen her, thou wouldst have thought, as I did, that her beauty was of God and not of the accursed one. It seemed as if the glow of a sunset in the south was in her cheeks. The flash of her eye was like the summer lightning, dazzling yet softened by a cloudy fringe of drooping eyelash. In her movement was the grace of an izzard of her own mountains. The curves of her form were lovelier than those of the soft rosy clouds that blend together in a quiet sky. How could I help loving such beauty? I was mad to seize it and keep it ever, before it could escape me. And in my madness I painted her again and again."

Arnaud's Confession.

"My son, do not tell me this is all thy sin. Thou hast not told me yet what has tortured thine heart, for I see that still thou lovest the very remembrance of this beauty, and would not confess even here that it was wrong to love it. Yet thou knowest thou hast sinned at least in

Arnaud's Confession.

thought. Go on and tell me what is the sin that troubles thee."

"Alas! it is of her I am thinking. I was cruel to her, and there is something else. I thought wrongly of her beauty, perhaps because I had no thought of it save that it was beauty, and cared not for the human life within it that made the beauty live. Oh! tell me, father, where was my sin? I hardly know myself, but I do know that I must have done grievous wrong to the maiden, for she loved me with all the passion of her wild nature. She would have kept me with her, and when I would not stay she fell fainting and seemed as one dead. Fool that I was, I thought only of her beauty. I would not for worlds have hurt her. Indeed, my heart is right in that matter, else surely I would not have fled when I saw her passion."

"Truly thou hast done harm, more perhaps than thou knowest, nor is it within thy power to help the maiden now. Thou hast sinned in thy selfishness, and also in yielding to a blind passion for a beauty which is not the highest, not the most inspiring, yet is of a kind that cannot be

trifled with even to inspire a painter's brush, because of the living heart that throbs beneath it. Tell me, did the beauty of this Cagot girl ever lift up thy thought and touch thy soul, or was the effect only upon thy ravished sense of sight?"

Arnaud's Confession.

"In truth, now that thou askest this question I cannot remember that I ever thought when I was painting her of aught but the beauty itself, the rich warm color, the exquisite form of head and neck and breast and limbs with their wondrous interlacing curves, and soft lights and shadows delicately interwoven. Surely it must have been of these wonders only that I thought while I painted. There was no suggestion of anything beyond the delight of the eye. It was as if the maiden was not living, but her beauty lived apart from her."

"My son, thou sayest thou art a painter. Hast thou never seen beauty which had in it uplifting power over the mind besides its spell of fascination for the eye?"

"You do not mean the beauty of the sky and the mountain, the rivers and the valleys, for I told you I knew of those

Arnaud's Confession.

long since. You mean the beauty of woman."

Arnaud paused a moment, and then there came a great light into his eyes, and it seemed as if he saw a vision.

"Yes, father," he said at length, in a voice that trembled with feeling. "I have seen such beauty in woman as to be an inspiration as well as delight, but I can see it no more. It is with Angela behind the dark walls of her prison home."

"Does not the thought of her beauty teach thee the sin that was in thy thought of the other? Surely selfishness and heart-breaking do not come from a love of the highest, either in beauty or aught else. It is written, 'If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee.' Of a truth thine eye is a cause of offence to thee if thou dost make a god of the delight it gives thee, and art content to worship it and think of naught beyond. Thou seest how near thou hast been to deadly sin, and what suffering thou hast caused to another by giving free rein to this passion of the eye. Dost thou truly repent of thy sin?"

"I repent, holy father, and I ask absolution. I see the sin as I knew it not before; but alas! I am an artist. Beauty is my life. I cannot truthfully say that it is within my power not to love it." *Arnaud's Confession.*

"I did not say that thou couldst change thy nature, but I do say that thou canst use thy gifts for high purposes and not for mere wanton selfishness."

"But may I not love Angela's beauty? The Archbishop and thou thyself have thought I was wrong in my thought of her, and have wished that I should not see her again; but truly it is not with her as with the other. I did not know it then, but now I know that her beauty inspires as well as delights, and only good can come from it. Never could I hope to express its pure loveliness; but if I cannot, I do not wish to paint anything else, and all my struggles for the highest in my art are in vain."

"As to this, my son, God will guide thee, but beware of thyself, for thy nature is unruly and hard to govern. Be watchful, and trust not thyself overmuch. He who gave thee thy gifts will help thee in the use of them, if thou wilt submit to

Arnaud's Confession.

his guidance. For the sin which thou hast sinned I give thee absolution, because of thy repentance. Rest in peace."

Arnaud had need for rest for mind and body. The long talk and the feverish agitation had greatly wearied him. The thought of Angela, and the talk about her, had excited him and filled him again with a sense of irrevocable loss, and it seemed to him neither just nor right that what he longed for most and what alone could lift up and inspire his life and his art, should be buried out of his sight forever. But now he could talk no more, and sank back exhausted on his rude couch.

The hermit brought some sticks and laid them upon the embers. The flames leapt up and lighted brilliantly the columns standing about them that seemingly supported the vast roof. Weird shadows played over the arches and the fantastic shapes of the rocks. Far off into the black distance stretched mysterious aisles leading to other halls, perhaps vaster and darker than this one. The deep thunder of the rushing water in the depths below reverberated among the columns and the arches until they trembled with the sound

of it. Surely creatures of terror and evil must dwell in this place of darkness and mystery. A creeping sense of dread came over Arnaud. He would have fled if he could, but he was too weak. At last the quiet of the hermit reassured him, for the old man was busy in making ready their simple meal, and he was as calm in this unearthly place as he might be in a sunny meadow by the river side. Indeed, it was here that he had found peace, and the holy man meant not that Arnaud should leave this place until his soul should be at rest and his strength restored.

Arnaud's Confession.

THE VOICES OF THE CLOISTER



HE retreat which Angela had built by the river was not a convent. It was a place where those women who innocently or wilfully had broken the laws of the church buried themselves alive and thus awaited death. It was to avoid public shame and disgrace that they took upon themselves the vow never to leave those grim walls until death called them thence. In no sense did such a vow mean consecration to the service of God. It meant rather self-chosen fleeing from reproach, protection from the evil eyes and tongues of an unfriendly world. True, it involved passive submission to the Church's decree, but that was far from a belief in the justice of it. The hearts beneath those gray

robes were oftener full of despair and even rebellion than of peace and willingness to devote themselves wholly to the service of the Church whose decree had blasted their lives. Nevertheless, the laws of the severest orders of nuns were not more severe than those imposed upon themselves by these devotees.

The Voices of the Cloister.

Continually they were engaged in the services of the Church, in prayer or penance, not because they loved them, but because they dared not leave their minds unoccupied lest they should go mad. But though the outer walls of this tomb were grim and dark, and the outward observances of the entombed ones as severe as they could make them, there was nevertheless beauty behind the walls and the love of it in these stricken hearts.

The beauty was in the cloisters and the chapel, which the enclosing walls surrounded and quite concealed from the view of those without. Angela was a child of the Pyrenees. Beauty had always been about her, and it seemed to her not well that even a tomb should be unadorned.

Perhaps instinct rather than design

caused her to make the cloister beautiful; perhaps beauty would grow up about a creature so lovely in form and spirit as Angela, whether she willed it or not.

The keynote of the cloisters' beauty was the up-springing of the flower from its stem. To Angela this was a type of her life and other lives within those walls, as they might have been, not as they were, for alas! no flower had sprung from them. They had been blasted by an untimely storm. No longer was the beauteous blossom possible. All was cold and frozen. Yet the very stones were eloquent. There were two rows of slender columns, one within the other, that went in graceful procession about the central court, which was full of heaven's bright sunlight. Their interlacing arches joined hands so that those in full light seemed ever leading on those in shadow, as if hoping that those in partial darkness might also come at last to the light, as together they went about the sunny court. Slender indeed were the columns, almost too slender to bear up their rich burden of beauty, slight as it was, for it was made of flowers and leaves.

The oak and the laurel, the acanthus and the rose, twined together their luxuriant foliage, and gave each column its own crown of grace and charm. In the lines of the columns and the arches that bound them together was the thought of upward seeking, far upward even toward the skies. Yet even such an ethereal spirit seemed to linger, lost for a moment in the foliage of the spandrels, ere it burst through to reach the higher beauty of the heavens. It was a mystic procession of graceful forms always hand in hand, always flower-crowned, those in the sunlight always seeking those in the shade, those in the shade tenderly keeping their half-seen blossoms, almost fearing lest the full light might mar their fragile forms, or make them shrink away too modestly from its ardent caress.

Beside these flower-crowned stems, beneath these arches so lovingly interlaced, walked those who living were yet dead to earthly life, and there Angela led them in the morning as the sun rose, in the full splendor of noon, in the quiet of paling twilight, in the gloom of midnight, to the chapel that was beyond the cloister,

where they sang, and prayed, and wept, and did penance self-inflicted. Here too were the up-springing arches of the cloister, but these were higher, and among them were windows through whose painted panes came the sunlight, making rainbows in the aisles. From the cell through the cloister to the chapel at the time of matins, thence again through the cloister to the cell for private prayer, then to the refectory for the morning meal, frugal, and eaten in silence, once more to the cell for reading and perhaps penance, then quiet walking in the cloister until the noonday services — so passed each morning, varied only by the storm or sunshine above the cloistered court. And the afternoons were like the mornings, and the nights were like the days in the ceaseless round of cell and cloister and chapel, prayer and praise and penance.

There was no sound of bell or organ in the chapel. There was to be nothing that could give to the world without any sign that there was life behind those grim walls. To each was appointed in due turn the duty of receiving at the low-arched door what was needed for food and raiment,

and this made the only variety of their lives, save the changes of light and shadow among the columns and the arches, the cells and the chapel. When this turn came to Angela she sometimes lingered in the cloister as she went toward the door, and again as she came from it. If the day were fine and the cloister radiant with sunlight, she would lean against a column and look upward toward the blue of heaven. Perhaps the passion for beauty would come over her, and she would throw back her cowl and loosen her auburn tresses, in which was the shining of imprisoned gold, and she would look upward at the climbing flowers and leaves of stone and beyond them toward the heaven to which the arches pointed. Then would the blue of her eyes seem like that of the sky itself. Her slender form with its curves of loveliness would blend with the flower-stem columns and the graceful arches. Then was the outward picture perfect in its beauty, save for the imprisoning walls that closed about it and would not let it blossom and bear fruit, as might even the lifeless stones that were all about her.

The Voices of the Cloister.

At such times the rebellion in Angela's

mind overcame her. Her youth and her beauty rose up in protest against the unbroken monotony of her prison. The columns and the arches, the dainty leaves and flowers, stone though they were, became living voices of beauty, and eagerly urged on her half-unwilling thought of freedom. When she knew she would burst her bonds if she dared she was sure the cloister's flowers were her friends, and wished to whisper to her always some new secret of that full life beyond the prison wall, of which she feared it was a sin even to think.

And then she would impose upon herself new penances more severe than before. Hour after hour she would kneel alone on the cold stones of the chapel in the night time, when the glory of the windows was shrouded with a pall of darkness and there was naught to suggest life and beauty, nothing, nothing about her save the cold and blackness of the tomb. But even there she would listen for the voices of the columns and the flowers, and they would speak to her heart in the very midst of her prayers, and their touch of love and life would make her pulse throb in spite of aching limbs and body half faint-

ing with weariness because of cold and fasting. As the slow hours went by, their voices overcame her more and more, until she could no longer pray because she would listen to them, and at last at midnight came the long procession, and the candles gave a fitful light about the altar before which she knelt. The solemn chant, the measured words of prayer echoed along the aisles and far up to the vaulted roof, dying away at last in stillness as the devotees arose, and she joined them as they went slowly and silently back to their cells.

It was always the same at this hour of midnight, and Angela hoped this outward peace of devotion would still the voices of the flowers; but no, they whispered even louder than before. The monotony of this death in life went on day after day, night after night, until Angela thought she would be mad unless she freely listened to her friends of the cloistered arches, and let herself be refreshed by their words of love and life and beauty. She yielded to them more and more, until she was their willing slave, ready to do their bidding. When the great fire came the monotony of this

life in a tomb was rudely broken. For those whose hearts were really sad there was now a wild hope that the fire would consume them and their time of weary waiting would be over. Angela was not one of these. Really she was longing for life, yet she remained true to her vow, although the Archbishop absolved them all, and bade them come forth and live. She was not one to yield to fear and, like a coward, flee from the face of death, which she and those with her had vowed they would await. But when Angela opened the low door and spoke to the Archbishop, who was kneeling there while the flames roared and leapt behind him, and begging them to come forth lest they perish, she saw another figure beside that of the praying priest. She saw Arnaud de Béarn, and she knew why he was there. His eyes met hers in that awful moment, nor could she help answering in sympathy their look of hopeless, passionate intensity. Her pride and her will conquered. The door was shut, and the imprisoned ones calmly awaited their doom. The flames were averted, and death did not come to them then. Something quite

different had come to Angela. Death would not come, but life was there with Arnaud just beyond the walls.

Afterward Angela trembled whenever her turn came to go to the door and open it to receive what was needed for those within. When the door opened she would see the shining river winding among the low hills. Trees bent over it, and the leaves of the willow kissed its shining wavelets. White lilies floated in still pools, and blue violets peeped out from mossy banks. But not upon these did Angela's trembling glance linger. She thought that Arnaud might be there, hidden in some copse, watching for the opening of the door and hoping that she would come at the call of love, though she would not at the threat of fear. And her heart told her she would go if he asked her. One word from him would shatter forever the hideous monotony of this death in life, and she would be alive again in love and youth, in beauty and in joy. But he did not come. She knew not that the Archbishop had seen the passion in his face when his eyes rested upon her that one moment when the door opened and

she stood there looking at him, and that the stern priest had banished her lover when he saw his love in his eyes. She knew not of the Cagots, nor of the storm; but she wondered why the man who loved her and whom she loved, did not rescue her, and bear her away by force, if need be, from this daily torture of monotonous peace, that was slowly killing all that was good in her.

Still he did not come. Day after day, week after week, month after month, and he came not. Nevertheless the monotony was broken. The thought that he might come gave a tremor of hope every time she went to the low door, and the flowers among the arches were really alive now, and she no longer tried to resist their whispered words. Nay, she sought them, and by the hour she talked with them in her heart.

A LETTER FROM COUNT RAIMOND



HERE came a day when she opened the door according to her custom, and found another standing there with those who brought the food and raiment. At first she thought it might be Arnaud, and her heart gave a wild leap and then stood still, until she became quite white and trembled. But in another moment her eyes told her that it was not he, but an old and trusted retainer of her father, Count Raimond. This man waited until the rest had gone and then approached the door, where Angela still stood watching him. With reverence he bowed and said: —

"My lady, I am the bearer of a letter from your father, and he bade me await your answer. Here is the letter."

A Letter from Count Raimond.

Kneeling, he placed it in her hand. Angela, not speaking a word, for this the rule of the retreat forbade, took it and read these words: —

"My Daughter,—I am sick unto death. There is no one to care for me. I am desolate, alone in the last hours of my life. I long for a loving word, a healing touch of sympathy and comfort. I fear my days are numbered, but perhaps your love would bring me back to life. If I must die, I cannot die in peace unless I hear from your own lips that you have forgiven me for betrothing you to the King and bringing the blight of sadness upon your young life. I was to blame, and I can no longer bear that thought. Come to me, my daughter, and tell me that you love me still. Then can I die in peace. The Archbishop tells me that your vow no longer binds you. Listen to the voice of your father, and come ere it be too late."

Angela pressed the letter to her heart. She bowed her head, and the tears flowed down her cheeks as she thought of her dying father waiting for her, longing for her love.

"Wait here," she said at last. "I will come again soon with my answer."

She closed the door. Silently she went

back through the cloister. She did not wish to hear the flower voices then, but they would speak, and they told her to go. She could not help hearing, but she would not yield to them. She passed beyond and went into the chapel. It was a day of glorious sunshine. The rainbows of promise that arched the aisles from one painted window to another lived in their palpitating beauty of light transformed to dazzling color. The altar itself was bright and gleaming with red and purple and green and yellow, like some great sun-touched gem. Angela knelt there and prayed. An answer of hope and love and duty came from the glory about her that God sent to lift her heart from the tomb and touch it anew with the thought of a life that her Creator meant she should live, and that her own heart had long been telling her she must live.

Angela rose and left the chapel. She went to the cells where the devotees were sitting in silence, and asked them to come to the court-yard of the cloister. There in the sunshine they gathered about her.

"Sisters in sorrow," she said, "I must

A Letter from Count Raimond.

leave you. My dying father calls me. Not to save my own life would I go hence, but to save his or to comfort him I must go. God has told me it is my duty, and the Archbishop loosed the bond of the vow, as ye know. Ye too are free. If there be any voice that calls you hence and ye are sure it comes from God, go forth in peace; but if ye will stay here with your sorrow and await a better life beyond, may God's blessing rest upon you."

They pressed about her and kissed her hand, weeping as her beautiful form passed slowly from them, under the arches toward the door. But the flowers and the leaves did not weep. They whispered more loudly than ever and were glad, and Angela heard them. Her heart gave loving answer to their gentle voices. She opened the door. The old soldier still stood there waiting.

"This is my answer," said Angela, "I go with you. Take me to my father."

They went together to the village, where retainers with horses awaited them. Then they followed the winding river among the trees that loved it, and they went

through the forest, where the leaves gleamed and glittered in the sunlight and the breeze made low music among the boughs. *A Letter from Count Raimond.*

Above the glades was the blue of heaven, and here and there a tender fleecy cloud floated in it. The birds were singing their love-songs and the little brooks made answer. At last the blue hills rose in the distance, and beyond towered grandly the snow-clad peaks of the Pyrenees. And to Angela as she rode on this seemed a resurrection. Life was all about her, joyous, up-springing, vivid. The tomb was broken, and it was almost as if heaven were opening before her. As she neared her native valley she could scarce restrain the beating of her heart. At last she saw it. The foaming river leapt to greet her; the green meadows warm in the sun gave her welcome; the low hills seemed to embrace her; the grand mountains rose about to protect her as of yore. There was her father's castle rising above the little village that she loved. Angela could no longer restrain herself; she urged her horse forward and flew on toward the gates of her

A Letter from Count Raimond.

childhood's home. Across the drawbridge she sped, and without a word to any she threw herself from her horse and rushed to her father's room. The Count still lived. As Angela in all her loveliness stood before him, he gave a cry of joy. In a moment she was in his arms. It seemed to him as if an angel of love and life had come, bearing a message of hope and peace.

HUNAUD'S LAST WORDS

IT was morning in the cave. Arnaud knew this because as he awoke he saw the hermit with his light coming toward him along the narrow pathway that led to the entrance. The old man had risen long before Arnaud awoke, and he had been out to gather herbs and get some vegetables from his little garden on the mountain side, and to bring some sticks for the fire. As he worked at these simple tasks he prayed. Such was his habit. His life was passed in prayer, uttered or silent. This morning his prayer was more than usually fervent, for his mind was greatly troubled. Arnaud's confession had deeply moved him, and he hardly knew if he had done right to grant him absolution. The very

Hunaud's Last Words.

thought of the Cagots was an abomination to him, and yet this young man had dwelt with them in the familiar intercourse of home; nay, more, the Cagot girl had loved him, and Arnaud had barely escaped deadly sin. The hermit could not have pardoned this, nor could he have understood it except for something in his own life, that secret cause for living in the cave of which he had spoken to Arnaud. The beauty of woman was not unknown to the venerable priest. He knew more of the artist's fiery furnace of temptation than Arnaud dreamed of as he made his confession. Indeed, the old anchorite was troubled because he feared his sympathy had led him astray and made him too lenient with the young man. Nevertheless, he could not be sorry he had granted the peace of absolution to one who had passed through so sore a trial, and who was so stricken in soul and mind and body. But he meant that the peace he had given should be followed by a warning. Arnaud must know that he could not thus sin again, unless he wished the gates of heaven to be closed against him.

As the hermit drew near, Arnaud rose

and went toward him, to give help with his burden. The young man felt quiet and refreshed. The cave, dark and awful as it was, no longer terrified him. The shadowy shapes of demons that he had seemed to see in the darkness about the columns and under the vast roof had disappeared. Even the thunder of the water as it rushed and tumbled below seemed not so dreadful as before. It was because his soul was at peace. He had confessed and been forgiven. The hermit greeted him kindly, and was glad that his strength had come back. Soon the great fire was again blazing, and once more they sat beside it and ate their simple meal.

Hunaud's Last Words.

"Holy father," said Arnaud at last, "you see that I am refreshed and comforted. I thank you for the peace you have given me, but I am still weak. I am afraid of myself. I cannot stay here and shun the world, for I have work to do. I know it, God tells me so. I have a life to live. I love, and oh, father! something makes me hope I may be loved, but I am not worthy yet. I am still weak from the struggle. Tell me what to do. I cannot help the Cagot girl;

Hunaud's Last Words.

I cannot see Angela. What can I do? My path is not plain before me. Tell me, for I know thou art wise, and I am ready to do as thou sayest."

"My son, there is but one thing for thee to do. Thou must go back to thine home and dwell there with thy father and thy mother, and in all humility thou must go again to the church of the Templars, and do such work as there is appointed for thee to do. Do there thy best, and give to others the beauty the Lord is pleased to reveal to thee, caring not, nor thinking whether it be some great thing, but caring only that it shall be the best thou hast to give. If thou dost work in this spirit the Lord will bless thee. It is written that whatsoever thine hand findeth to do thou shalt do it with thy might, as unto the Lord and not unto men. Work, therefore, and trust that he who gave thee thy talent will teach thee how best to use it."

"I hear thy words, and I obey; I know that thou speakest the truth. I will fling from me wild and selfish ambition. I will no longer make the delight of the eye my god, but I will love beauty still,

and may God help me to reveal it in truth and loveliness to others; for that and only that can I do, if indeed I can do anything now."

Hunaud's Last Words.

For a few moments they sat there quietly, the aged hermit and the youthful artist. There was the light of hope in each face. The old man was looking toward the reward beyond, for his life-struggle was nearly passed. The young man's eyes were kindled with a new light, for he looked toward a future here of love-inspired work, touched by the spirit of beauty and led upward by the spirit of God.

"Father," he said at last, "I am strong enough to go. The fever of body has left me; the tumult of my mind has been calmed by thee, for thou hast led me to him who rules all tempests and brings his own calm after the storm."

"Farewell, my son; thou canst not too quickly set thine hand to the plough, and see to it that thou lookest not back."

Arnaud rose and went toward the hermit. Reverently he knelt and kissed his hand. Then he took the light and went steadily along the narrow ledge above the

Hunaud's Last Words.

torrent. As he came to the broader platform of rock that was before the cave-entrance he turned and looked again toward the hermit's hall. The flames of the fire still lighted it. The weird shadows still rose and fell among the vast mysterious columns and the arches far above. The old man was kneeling with eyes uplifted toward heaven. Arnaud knew he was praying for him. He knew too that the hermit's last work on earth was done. He felt that soon he would lie down in the cave where he had struggled and conquered alone, and his soul would rise from among the deep shadows and find its reward in the everlasting light.

One more step, and Arnaud was again in the free air beneath the blue of the heaven. The mystery and the darkness of the cave were as a dream, but not the truth in his heart that had come to him there. The spirit of the hermit was at his side as he turned resolutely down the familiar path toward the home where his father and his mother waited in patience for the wanderer's return. It was life again. There was no longer darkness.

There were no more demons within or without. Heaven's sunlight bathed the landscape. The torrent that rushed beside him was not the hidden roaring flood far beneath him in the cavern. It was the river that he knew. Surely it was not the same that had nearly overwhelmed him in that night of terror. Now its waters leapt with life. They gleamed and sparkled. They were glad. They beckoned him on and on, ever onward toward the peaceful valley they were seeking. Below were the meadows, where were grazing the cattle and the sheep. Those who tended them were quiet and peaceful in the sunlight with the rich verdure all about them. Ah, he knew it well. The great mountains too — they were keeping watch. These snow-clad sentinels were guarding the valley that no foe might enter there. Surely it would be peaceful in the home. Surely the father and the mother would still be there by the great fire, and his eyes would look upon them once more. On and on he walked. The valley widened, the rushing river became more quiet. Now the Templars' church rose again before him. He had

Hunaud's Last Words.

seen it last when the lightning blazed above it in lurid fire on that awful night. Now it was peaceful in the sunshine. The old ramparts stood strong and grim as of yore, and the tower with the bells rose above them. He heard the chime of matin song. The Templars were kneeling within. Perhaps the Cagots were even now crawling beneath the wall and seeking their hidden chapel where they might worship, unseen. Ah, yes, the hermit had said he was to work there. He would go. He would seek the simple painter-monk, and together they would do what they could to bring God's own beauty into the church. Perhaps that beauty would soften men's hearts, so that even the poor Cagots might come and worship with them. But still he went on. He was not to linger by the church. The hermit had said he must first gladden the home. The valley broadened now, and the river was calm among the meadows.

Soon he saw the houses clustered by the bridge, and among them rose the thatched roof that he loved. Slowly and reverently he went toward the door. Trembling, he lifted the latch and looked

within. Ah, joy! It was still there, the picture of his boyhood. The father and the mother were sitting by the great fire. She knitted while the old man mended his farming tools, and they talked together in low tones. They were talking of him, and wondering when their lost boy would come home again.

Hunaud's Last Words.

"Father, mother, I am here," he said.

For a moment they were startled, but not for long. They had been waiting for him, and in their simple faith they knew he would come. Now he was there, coming toward them with bowed head. They rose to meet him. Their arms were about him. With tears of joy and broken words they gave him his welcome home.

ANGELA AND COUNT RAIMOND



T was true that Count Raimond was very near to death when his daughter came. It seemed as if his joy at the sight of her had given him new strength, but it was only the strength of great excitement. Soon he sank back again on his pillows, and became so weak that he almost lost consciousness. Angela knew then that she must care for him and watch him night and day. His only hope was in her constant, loving nursing, which would minister to the body and also to the heart. Very quietly she set about her task. Not for a moment did she think of failure. It seemed that God had called her away from her living tomb to work and wait for life, not death. She knew that God would

spare to her this life which He had called upon her to save. Strong in this faith, she sat hour after hour by her father. The touch of her hand had healing in it and could cool the fevered brow. There was peace in her ministrations; and even when he was most restless, the sick man would become more quiet when she smoothed his pillows and arranged the drapery on his couch, and spoke low words of love and hope. Sometimes he slept, and then Angela was glad; she would sit looking at him, and her eyes would be bright with courage and soft with tenderness. Not far from the Count's bed was an arched niche which was his oratory. Here was a little altar of carved wood, and there was a window of stained glass above it. Here he had been wont to kneel alone in prayer. The window was toward the east, like those behind the altar in the chapel where Angela and her sisters had so often prayed together. After a long night of watching, at last the sun would come, and there would be a rainbow of promise above this altar, as there had been above that in the chapel. But this rainbow was not like the other.

Angela and Count Raimond.

It was far brighter, infinitely more beautiful. Angela had always thought those bright promises written in light spoke of a life hereafter, but this rainbow above the Count's altar kept promising life here, and yet strangely enough it was far brighter than the others. For a while she could not understand, but at last she knew. The full brightness even of a heavenly hope could not shine upon those who selfishly shut themselves away from all the suffering of life, and gave no hand to help. That light of heaven shines here on earth for those who live in loving helpfulness, and it will grow ever brighter until there shall come the full splendor of the perfect day.

Though Angela sat here day after day and night after night there was no weariness in her task. The meaningless monotony of cell and cloister and chapel, prayer and penance and fasting, was gone. There was life in her work and life in her heart.

At last the fever passed by, and slowly, very slowly, her father's strength began to come back, though he was long so weak that he could hardly speak above a whisper.

Then came the time when they could talk together. Count Raimond was sad as she spoke of the days in the retreat, nor did she dare to tell him all the dreariness of them lest he should reproach himself too bitterly because of his part in that betrothal so rudely broken, that had brought all his daughter's suffering upon her. She asked him about the King.

Angela and Count Raimond.

"My daughter, the King grieved bitterly when thou wert taken from him. Often he called me to him that he might tell me of his sadness. He had given thee all his love, and well he knew that no other could ever take thy place in his heart. It was long ere he would think of marriage. But kings are not as other men. They must bury their own sorrows and live for their people. The good work he had begun for Béarn might not go on in peace unless he could train up a son who would know how to carry it further. So at last he yielded to his councillors' advice, and his own unwilling judgment, and wedded a wife, a princess, from the land across the mountains, hoping that thus the feud between his kingdom and hers might be quieted; and indeed

the mountain passes have been safer since, and the two peoples are brought closer together. Perhaps they will join in one kingdom by and by."

The old man looked steadily at his daughter as he said these words. Surely there would be tears of wounded pride, if not outraged love. But no, it was not so. Angela was perfectly calm. There was a light in her face, but it was a peaceful and beautiful light, and she spoke not a word.

"Angela, I feared to tell thee this lest it should wound thee, but thou lookest not sad but rather glad."

"Father, I am glad, glad indeed that the King has done his duty and is at peace, and that his grief for the loss of me did not make him forget the good of the people God has put in his charge."

"Thou speakest the truth indeed, but no maiden whose heart was touched could speak thus. I thought thou didst love him, and that the loss of him was thy bitterest grief; but surely that cannot be. Tell me, did he never touch thine heart?"

"No, father, but I revered him, and

I reverenced thy wish. I would have been a faithful queen to him, as seemed to be my duty. I even thought then that I might love him in time, but now I know that never could have been."

Angela and Count Raimond.

Count Raimond's spirit was lightened. His daughter had been spared the agony of a broken heart. He never had dreamed that Angela did not love this great King whom he himself loved so devotedly, and in whose service he would have given his life.

"I am indeed glad, Angela," said he, "that thou didst not suffer as I feared. Surely thou wert sorely overcome in the church. I bore thee thence fainting in my arms."

"Oh, father, it was the shame, the disgrace, the open scandal; and then, too, I was grieved for the King. Though I loved him not as a woman ought to love, yet was he dear to me, and I was sorry to cause him pain and bring what then seemed like shipwreck to his life. But all that is past, and I am glad that he has a queen and that all is well with him and with his kingdom and hers."

"Thou dost indeed bear very bravely

the news of his marriage, which I feared to tell thee. Nevertheless, thou hast not told me all the reason for this unselfish interest in his welfare. It seems to me thou carest marvellous little that another has taken thy place."

The Count shook his head, and looked more narrowly at his daughter, who averted her face from him and was silent; but there was a telltale blush on her cheek.

"Ah, my daughter, I see. There is another of whom thou thinkest. Nay, seek not to conceal it from me, for I read thy thought in thy face. But how couldst thou find a lover within those grim walls that thou didst build? Ah, Angela! Angela! I fear thou wert but a sorry nun. But, nay, I remember thou didst never promise to be a nun at all. It was only that thou wouldst await death there, and thy young life tired of that."

"Nay, father, do not jest," said the maiden, at last. "Thou knowest I meant to keep my vow, and thought I could keep it there; but alas! there was some one who entered there with me, and when the door was shut he was still there and would not go away."

"What dost thou say? Some one entered there with thee? Surely, surely that could never have been. What—" *Angela and Count Raimond.*

"Father, father, thou dost not understand," said Angela, blushing hotly now but looking at him fearlessly. "Thou knowest no man ever entered there. It was only in my heart that he entered with me, and it was the thought of him that stayed there and would not go away, and oh! the flowers and the leaves in the cloisters kept telling me about him. Perhaps they were wicked, but I could not help listening. And oh! father, once he tried to get in at the time of the fire, and I hoped he would, but the Archbishop would not let him. Do not blame me. I know how weak and sinful I was, but I could not help it. If only the flowers would have stopped whispering about him! but they would not, and it grew worse until I hoped every time I went to the door he would come in; but he did not, and I was sorry and sad, even when I went and prayed before the altar and asked to be forgiven. I could not help it, indeed I could not, for I loved him. Now thou knowest all."

Angela and Count Raimond.

"Blame thee, my daughter? thou little knowest my heart. It is my suffering for thee and my loneliness that have made me ill. I could not bear to think of thy young life entombed there. Now thou givest me hope of joy for thee and for me also. But who is this youth who had conquered that sweet heart of thine, and where didst thou meet him?"

"I was afraid to tell thee, for I thought thou wouldst forbid one of humble birth to wed her who was to have been a king's bride. Indeed, it was for that thought as much as for my disgrace that I hid myself from the world. But I am afraid no longer, since thou sayest it is my happiness for which thou longest. I will tell thee his name. It is Arnaud de Béarn. Oh, father, knowest thou aught of him? Tell me, tell me, where is he?"

"Arnaud de Béarn! Ah, yes, I know the name well. His family dwell in the little village below the hill on which stands the Templars' church. Long have they dwelt there. It is true they are humble folk, so far as outward station goes; but they have as much reason to be proud of their birth as I, for there is no

nobler blood that flows in any family in all Béarn. If what is told of them is true, they are descended from one of the early kings of this ancient realm. But is the young man worthy? I know him not."

Angela and Count Raimond.

"I know thou wouldst not believe if I told thee what I think. He is an artist, and his thoughts are great and high, far beyond my understanding. He is noble and brave; but oh! tell me of him. Where is he?"

"My daughter, I do not know, but surely it is he of whom the Archbishop told me when he came to see me and to tell of the fire that threatened thee. He spoke well of the young man; but he said he was the victim of a hopeless passion for some one within those walls of thine, and thinking that was a sin he sent him away, far off among the mountains, that he might be still and repent. Ah! why did not he say that thou wert the lady of Arnaud's love? Soon would I have found means to bring you together. I suppose he kept it from me because he thought it would hurt my pride, whereas he might have known that was broken

Angela and Count Raimond.

already, and I was suffering only because of thy sorrow. Ah! well, it is not too late. Surely he will come back, for it is certain that he loves thee, and he is not the man to give thee up while there is any hope, if the true blood of his fathers is in him."

"Thy words bring me hope," replied Angela, "for now I know why he never again came to the gate when I opened it and thought I might see him each time. Away among the mountains, thou sayest. Did he say where?"

"No, my daughter; but fear not, he will come. His love will find thee. I feel it in my heart that you will be happy, and in your happiness will be happiness for me. Now I have talked long, and fain would rest, for I am weary; but I am in peace, for I can see joy and hope in thine eyes."

Angela smoothed her father's pillows. She kissed him and soothed him, and in a little while he sank into a deep sleep.

During the long days and nights of the Count's illness Angela had not once left the castle. Rarely did she leave his room. Soon now she could leave him

for a while and go forth once more into the beautiful valley and look up to the mountains that she loved. She would feel their breezes on her cheek and the roses would come again where there were too many liiies now. For a while she would wander on the hillsides under the trees, and in the meadows among the flowers. Her heart leapt madly at the very thought of it. That would be gladness enough. But no! there would be another joy. Had not her father said he would come? Surely his heart would lead him to her.

Angela and Count Raimond.

AGAIN IN THE TEMPLARS' CHURCH



T was not very far from the Count's castle on the rock to the peasant's cottage by the bridge across the river that flowed quietly now through the valley, nor were the two lives far apart that went on in the halls of the castle and beneath the thatched roof of the cottage. Arnaud's first thought was for his father and his mother. In the selfishness of his passion for beauty he had forgotten them. Long had he left them alone, nor had he found what he so madly sought. True, he had come near to it. He had seen the beauty which enthralls the senses, and felt its power. That power he knew too well, for it had led him into deadly peril and well-nigh ruined his life. He dared not even think

of it, yet he knew that he could never paint as he had before. There was something even in the sensuous beauty that could not be forgotten, but it was not complete. There was something higher, perhaps he could find it even yet, though he hardly dared to hope. But now he would be a part of the home life. He would do his duty there, and he would go to the church, and paint again with the old monk.

Again in the Templars' Church.

Arnaud told his parents of his wanderings. They wondered, but they could not understand. When he told of the fire, and Angela, who would not come out even at the call of the Archbishop, they were thrilled; but when he spoke of the Cagots they shuddered and crossed themselves even as the monk had done. They could not bear to think their son had dwelt among the accursed people. Arnaud dared not tell them of the beauty of Sarandé, for they would have feared his soul was indeed lost; but when he spoke of the hermit and the cave they were glad, for they knew he was safe there, and they felt he was safe now because he had been there. Gladly would they have sought the hermit to thank him, but Ar-

Again in the Templars' Church.

naud had told how he had left him praying by the fire in the cavern, and that something in his heart said to him the old man's days on earth were nearly ended. Then they were sorry, but they took comfort in the thought that if he died they could go to the church and offer masses for the repose of his soul.

In the days that followed Arnaud did not paint. In truth he almost feared his art, because it had led him so near to evil. Quietly and lovingly he did the simple duties that came to him in the cottage and on the farm. He went to the meadows with the cattle and the sheep, and he came in the evening to the fireside. He was glad in the thought of his helpfulness. He rejoiced in the beauty of the mountain-girdled meadows, but he knew well there was more for him to do. His art was his gift, and it could not be folded in a napkin. At last he went again to the Templars' church. He passed the ramparts and entered the court. There was no one there. The Templars were in their cells at prayer. He went farther and stood before the high altar. All was silent, and at first he thought he was alone

in the place where he had so long struggled with his art, and all to no purpose, as it seemed now. But he was not alone. The old monk was still painting there, though his easel was not in its accustomed place. It was nearer the altar, and half hidden by it. Arnaud went toward him, but so absorbed was the painter in his work that he did not look up until his pupil was close beside him. Then, startled, he dropped his palette and brushes, and looked at the young man, who had gone, as he thought, forever. In another moment he embraced and kissed him with the love of a father, and blessed him for coming again to help an old man in the work he could not do alone.

Again in the Templars' Church.

They talked long together, and Arnaud told the story of his wanderings, and how he was sad because of failure, and only hoped that now he might help a little and add something to the sacred beauty of the church; but he did not know, he could not tell, he could only try. Gladly indeed was his offer received.

"I knew," said the monk, "that my prayer would be answered. I have prayed

Again in the Templars' Church.

that I should not die until I saw a great picture above the altar, but even while I prayed I felt that I could not paint it. Again and again in these long years have I tried, but I cannot see the madonna's face, nor that of the holy child; but surely thou canst see and paint them. Thou sayest thou hast failed to find the beauty thou didst seek, but it cannot be. I know that my prayer is answered."

"Nay, father, it is not answered yet. I must work long before that beauty of which thou speakest is revealed to me, if indeed mine eyes are ever to be blessed with the sight of it. Let us wait and be patient. Let us do first some humble thing. There is beauty in every flower and leaf. In all harmonies of form and color is there beauty. This much have I learned. Let us adorn the chancel as best we can. Perhaps the picture of which thou dreamest and for which thou hast prayed may come while we work and wait."

To this they agreed at last, and as they worked on together the chancel was transformed, and where the cold gray of the stone had been were vines and flowers,

and above upon the vaulted roof were hues like those of the snow-mountains when the setting sun touched them. Thus in the church and in the home passed many quiet days.

Again in the Templars' Church.

THE END OF ARNAUD'S QUEST



T last the time came when Count Raimond was so much better that Angela could leave him for a while. At first she dared not go far from the castle, but she would wander through the streets of the little village, and perhaps go as far as the river, the sparkling joyous river whose glad rippling voice spoke always of new life and hope, though it sped on so swiftly toward the far deep sea.

All communion with nature was rapture to one so long entombed within prison walls. Her heart danced and leapt with the bright wavelets, and it seemed as if they spoke to her as had the flowers and the leaves in the cloister, only their voices were truer and more touching, and it

seemed sometimes as if they bade her seek some one who waited for her, some one to whom she could bring joy and brightness as they were bringing it to her. And they told her she would find him, though they never told her where.

The End of Arnaud's Quest.

One day the Count was so well that Angela thought she could walk as far as she pleased. It was a cloudless day in the late spring. In the valley and on the lower hill-slopes it was already summer, and the wild-flowers were springing everywhere. There were violets peeping out in the shade of great trees, and there were white daisies in the sunlight dancing with the mountain breeze. Angela threw back the blue mantle which she had thrown over her head and shoulders. She loosened the bands that bound her hair, and it fell about her in a shower touched with gold. She gathered violets and daisies and playfully crowned herself with these like a child-queen of the May, and then she went on and on through the meadows, treading a path her heart had told her without her asking, for she came to the field of the poppies.

There she stood like a startled fawn.

The End of Arnaud's Quest.

Not the crimson of the blossoms stopped her, dazzling as it was, nor the beauty of the corn-flowers yellow in the sun; no, nor yet the tender thoughts that dwelt about that field. She stopped, afraid though glad, with beating heart, because she saw a figure coming toward her up the hill-side, and she knew that it was he.

Arnaud was weary with his work that day. The sunshine would come into the dark church and it wooed him thence. Why did it always speak of Angela far away behind her prison walls? It had no other word, but only Angela! Angela! Angela! He could bear it no longer. At least he could go to the field of the poppies where he had seen her first, and there he would see her again in his dreams. Down the long hill he went, and he crossed the river, whose bright waves were like the sunlight, eloquent of her. Now upward through the meadows, and at last he saw the crimson gleam of the flowers that he loved.

Then he bowed his head in reverence, for it seemed to him he was about to tread on holy ground; and he went on with slower step until he stood among the

poppies that had always been about her in his thoughts since first he saw her there. At last he raised his eyes, and in the sunlight a vision rose before him lovelier far than any seen before in dreams. It was the lady of his love, but he thought he saw some angel of the sunshine and the flowers.

She was looking toward him with violet eyes wide opened, filled with wonder but softly tender. Her red lips were slightly parted, as though she caught her breath. The auburn hair wherein the sunbeams were entwined fell about her, and the breeze played lovingly among its tresses. One white hand held her fluttering mantle of blue, close to the snowy throat. The other was stretched toward him with a timid gesture. The folds of her white robe clung close about the flowing curves of her form, lovely in its tender lines, but strong and rich with the gracious beauty of the perfect woman. The violets and the daisies crowned her, and the sunlight in her hair made a halo around her head. Thus stood she there with the poppies and the corn-flowers at her feet.

Arnaud fell on his knees and crossed

his hands upon his breast. He gazed upon her entranced, nor could he breathe for a time because of the wonder of the vision. Surely in another moment it would go back to the heaven whence it came. But no, as he knelt there, soft color gently spread over her cheeks as the flush of day mantles the cheek of dawn.

She bowed her head and hid from him the blue of her heavenly eyes; but she did not go, she only trembled like her daisies in the breeze, and then he knew that she was a woman, and a great wave of love rushed over his heart as he rose and went toward her with clasped hands.

"Angela! Angela! Surely thou art Angela indeed! I thought I had seen an angel, a saint. I know not, but I feared it was a vision, and would vanish, to leave me alone again. Truly thou art a vision, but thou art also Angela, my love, oh! my love! Nay, do not move, do not speak. Let me tell thee how I have seen thee in my dreams, and how when I was awake thou hast always been present with me and always enfolded in my heart. Could I look toward heaven and not

see thine eyes? Ah! thou art indeed my heaven, Angela! thou knowest that I love thee. Thou hast known it long. Surely thou knewest it in the beginning. Surely thy heart told thee why I sought thee when thou wert in thy prison. Thou canst not say me nay. Thou shalt not. I will not let thee speak. Ah! yes, I will, those lips are not unkind. There is no sternness in those eyes. Angela! my own! tell me that thou lovest me."

"Oh, Arnaud! I fear thou knowest what I have hardly dared to let mine own heart know. Thou hast come upon me unawares. Thou hast surprised my secret. Only the flowers in the cloister and the field knew it before. How didst thou know it so soon? Thou art a thief. Thou hast stolen it in the cloister or by the river when I knew not thou wert nigh, even as I thought not to see thee here, among the poppies, where first I saw thee. Why camest thou hither, Arnaud?"

"Nay, love, I know not. Why camest thou?"

"I know no more than thou dost, but I think it was to gather poppies."

"Thou dost not need them, sweet; thy

lips are redder far, nor dost thou need the violets that pale beside thine eyes. But thou hast found my love. It is all thine. Tell me thou wilt take it, tell me with a kiss."

He rose from his knees, and put his arm about her. For a moment their lips met in love's first kiss; then her beautiful head fell upon his shoulder, and there was a silence broken only by the throbbing of their hearts.

"Ah, Arnaud," she said at last, "is it right that I should love thee? Was it right that I loved thee even in my prison? I know not why. I thought it was sin, but my heart would not be still. Tell me the reason, for thy heart knows it. If it was wrong I must go back and do penance until I sin no more."

"Love is its own reason, my darling. It is like the wind that bloweth where it listeth. Only God knows whence it came or whither it goes. It is enough that thou lovest me, and I love thee. There is no wrong in such a love. Let there be no fear in thine heart, for perfect love casteth out fear."

"Oh, Arnaud, yes, I know that what

thou sayest is true, else would I not be here, nor would I have listened to thy words, though I longed to hear them. But I fear it is not right to give myself to happiness when the sad sisters are still there behind the stern walls and I might help them, if I went to them again, and gave myself to them. I fear I should go back and comfort them if I can."

The End of Arnaud's Quest.

She drew away from him with averted face, and he trembled at the thought that she might leave him even now, although his heart told him that could not be, since she had confessed her love.

"Angela, thou sayest they need thee. All who have known thee must long for thee, but they do not need thee as I do. Have they not renounced life? If they wish for it again, are they not free, as thou wert, to come forth and seek it once more? Thou canst give them nothing but consolation in approaching death. To me thou givest life itself, and all that makes it worth the living. Thou wouldst not dare to ruin the life which God has put in thine hand. Surely his message is too plain. Thou canst not shut thine ears to it. I cannot live without thy love.

Thy beauty alone can inspire the work God has given me to do here."

He did not need to plead so long, for her heart was on his side, nor could she longer resist its voice.

"Come with me to the castle," she said at last. "Let us seek my father's blessing."

Hand in hand they went from among the poppies, through the green meadows, under the great trees, down again to the joyous river in "that new world which is the old." They went through the little village, and came to the drawbridge of the castle. It was lowered for their entrance. They passed beneath the great gate under the tower, and stood together for a moment in the court-yard, that was full of sunshine. Bright, joyous spirits of life and love seemed these two, come to gladden the grim walls that rose about them, and bring light and peace to the castle halls, that were gloomy and still in long loneliness.

Angela and Arnaud went up the winding stair in the turret that led to her father's chamber. Count Raimond was praying before the altar in the niche. He heard

the opening of the door. Rising from his knees, he turned and saw his daughter standing there, with Arnaud beside her. He had been blessing her for coming to save his life, and fervently had he prayed for her happiness. In the deep tenderness of Angela's eyes, in Arnaud's glance of passionate love, he saw the answer to his prayer.

"Father, we have come to seek thy blessing."

"Come hither, my children. Gladly will I give the blessing ye ask, for I see that love has brought you to each other. It is well that joy and peace should come to you after long suffering. Mine own heart rejoices with you."

They went and knelt before him by the altar. He laid his hands upon their heads and blessed them. The light that came through the painted window fell full upon the happy father as he bent above the kneeling lovers, so radiant in their beauty and their youth.

Never had the altar's rainbow seemed so full of promise as in that bright moment.

The simple story of their love and

The End of Arnaud's Quest.

their meeting in the field of the poppies soon was told, and a gladness long unknown came to Count Raimond's heart as he heard it, a gladness that he knew would dwell there always till he died.

When their sweet talk was done and the Count wished to rest, Arnaud left Angela there and sought his father and mother that he might tell them of the great new joy that had come into his life. There is no need to tell of the gladness that filled their simple hearts as they heard his story. The peace of love that had come to the castle came also to the cottage.

ARNAUD PROMISES AN ALTARPIECE



HE next day Arnaud went to the church to take up his work again.

He found the old monk quite out of patience, and grumbling to himself as he worked.

"Where hast thou been so long? Thou knowest well I can do naught without thee. The pictures will never be finished if thou dost spend thy time wandering I know not where."

Arnaud said nothing. He only smiled. Surprised at his silence, the old man turned from his painting and looked at Arnaud. In the young man's face was joy and hope and inspiration. He seemed like another being.

"What has come to thee, my son? — for surely thou lookest like one who has seen

Arnaud Promises an Altar-piece.

a vision, and the spell of its beauty is still upon thee."

"I have seen a vision, father, a fairer vision than thou canst believe, and I have found a love tenderer than I thought could be on earth. I found again Count Raimond's daughter Angela, whom I loved long ago, but thought I had lost forever. She has promised to be my wife."

"Indeed I rejoice with thee, my son. I am glad that thou hast found happiness, for I know thou hast suffered long. And now I suppose you will leave the old painter, you will work no longer in the Templars' church, for your heart is full of Count Raimond's daughter, and you will forget all else. I shall be left alone again, and I cannot finish the work, nor can I hope to see the picture over the altar."

Arnaud only smiled again and looked lovingly at his aged master.

"What is it, my son; why do you smile? Do you think it is sweet for me to work on here alone, and to know the beautiful dream I have dreamed will never come to pass?"

"Nay, I smile because I love thee, and I know now I can bring joy to thine heart,

and to my own. The picture thou dreamest of shall be painted, for I have found the secret of beauty that I sought. It is true that I am glad because I love and am loved; but I am glad too because my art is also blessed, for at last the highest beauty has been revealed to me. Listen, and I will tell thee all.

Arnaud Promises an Altar-piece.

"When first I saw Angela long ago I was dazzled by the beauty of her face and form, and I longed to paint her; but she was taken from me ere I had half learned to know what her beauty really was. I had only seen her eyes bluer than heaven's depths, the golden glory of her hair, the snowy whiteness of her neck, the lovely outlines of her figure. Ah! indeed it was no wonder that I saw no more in the little while we were together. It was enough to see that, for never had I dreamed that anything on earth could be so beautiful. I knew not then that any higher beauty was possible.

"But she vanished from my sight. She was buried in a living tomb. I sought her there, but she would not come forth. Then the Archbishop sent me away far up among the mountains, and I dwelt

Arnaud Promises an Altar-piece.

among the Cagots. Nay, do not tremble and shrink from me. They are not what thou thinkest. Among them was a maiden who was more beautiful than I can tell thee, and I painted her again and again; but I was not satisfied. At first I knew not why; but at last I saw that I was painting only what delighted my eye. There was no high purpose kindled in me. There was no uplifting power in my work for me or for others. I was painting only for the pleasure of the ravished senses. Soon I knew it was not good for me or for the maiden to do this, and I fled from there lest mischief should befall. And I was sad because of it and I suffered, for I knew I had sinned, and I feared the highest secret of beauty would be forever hidden from me because of my sin and my blindness. But God was merciful to me, and I learned to wait in patience. Now Angela is with me, and I have come to know why beauty like hers inspires and uplifts. In it are all the charms of form and color, but there is besides a sacredness of purity. There shines through it the beauty of the spirit within. It is this beauty that I will seek to paint in the pic-

ture thou dost long for. Now, I have told thee. Art thou content?" *Arnaud Promises an Altar-piece.*

"It is a strange tale, my son; I understand it not, for I have dwelt always in my cell, and in the church. I have been peaceful and content, and I doubt if I would have been happier had I gone among the Cagots and been out in the storm, and in that fearful cave like thee. But it is true I could not paint the picture for the altar, and I was unhappy because I could not do it. Now thou sayest it will be painted, and that will surely bring me peace again. Let us go to work at once."

"Nay, father, not yet. Let us finish these decorations first, and then afterward I will paint the picture. It will not be long. We have carried this work so far that we can go on in patience for yet a little while that we may finish it."

The old man grumbled and muttered to himself that young men did not know what patience and waiting meant to old men, who might die any minute; but he was soon reconciled, and their work went on for a time quietly and peacefully as before. But there was a new spirit even in the decorative work of the young painter.

THE ANNUNCIATION

AFTER their marriage, Arnaud and Angela dwelt with Count Raimond in the castle.

It was a time of joy and peace, of life and of hope in those ancient halls that had long been cold and desolate. Life with Angela meant to Arnaud not only the full sweetness of mutual love, but also inspiration for the art that was his life-work. Day by day the wonder of her beauty grew, and the longing to express it in color, form, and spirit became more intense.

At last this longing began to take definite form in his thought, and trembling between fear and hope he began a picture. The face and form before him were lovely with every charm of woman, but his art

would fail utterly if he only painted these, and did not express that spirit of love and purity that gave to the outward loveliness a beauty that was more of heaven than earth.

The Annunciation.

Patiently he worked with the high light of inspiration in his eyes, until at last the painting was finished, so far as was possible for his art to carry it. Then he saw that while he painted Angela he had thought of Mary, the woman who was almost divine.

He had seen her in the clouds of heaven with glory all about her. Her form was draped in purest white and a mantle of blue drooped in many a graceful fold to her feet. Over her breast her hands were clasped as in prayer. The flowing sleeves of white fell back and left bare her snowy arms. Her face was raised toward heaven. The violet eyes were opened wide in passionate wonder and adoration. The beautiful lips were slightly parted, as in a trembling sigh of ecstasy. Over her low white brow the auburn hair was parted and thence unconfined fell about her head and neck, lingered for a moment on her shoulders,

The Annunciation.

and floated thence until it was wholly blended with the radiance of the opened heavens.

Beneath her feet and encircling her form were clouds that seemed wafted upward by some breath of heaven. And among these clouds were cherub faces that looked upon her with tender joy. Some, though child-like, were thoughtful as in wonder, others were radiant in gladness. The beauty of the child was blended with the beauty of the perfect woman, and herein was the thought of life and love. The heavenly light irradiated all the beauty and lifted it to realms divine.

Though bathed in light and smiled upon by cherub faces, it was not an angel that was painted here, but a woman who could love and be loved, one to whom would come the sacred joys of motherhood and in whose heart her husband would rejoice always. Mary was worshipped not only because she was the mother of God, but also for her perfect womanhood, which man always has adored and always will. It was the glorification of this womanhood that Arnaud had painted, nor could he be true to his sub-

ject without bringing it very close to heaven while cherishing also its every earthly charm. *The Annunciation.*

When the picture was finished, Arnaud doubted much whether the old monk would be pleased to see it above the altar, for it was not at all like the pale emaciated saints which usually were in the church and chapels. Nor was it a madonna, for the Christ-child had not yet come. No; it was Mary as the angel saw her when he brought the message from the Lord.

Arnaud had been painting the decorations in the chancel with the monk all this time while he was working on his picture in the castle. True, he gave only a part of his time to the work in the church and he said nothing about the picture.

The old monk became very impatient, and grumbled more and more, saying he would not live to see the altarpiece of his dream, if it did not come soon. He was getting very old. The days were passing quickly and nothing was done.

One morning very early, before the monk had begun his work, Arnaud brought the picture to the church and

The Annunciation.

placed it above the altar. Then he hid himself behind a column in the nave and awaited the coming of the old painter. At last the door opened, and he came in with slow and faltering step. He took up his palette and his brushes and turned toward the chancel.

Suddenly he stopped, and put his hand before his eyes like one dazzled. Then he fell on his knees, and lifted his eyes again toward the altar. The vision that had startled him was still there, and he began to pray. It was not long ere he knew it was not a vision, but the picture of his dreams.

Then he rose to his feet again, and Arnaud stood beside him.

"Art thou content, father?" said the young painter.

"Ah, my son!" said the old monk in a broken voice, "methought I saw the Mother of the Lord. Now may I depart in peace, for more than the beauty that I dreamed of is above the altar that I love."

THE PICTURE'S MESSAGE TO SARANDÉ

THE next Sunday was a bright and beautiful day in the spring-time. Very early in the morning the Cagots left their mountain home and came downward through the gorge on their way to worship in the Templars' church. Benaté was quite feeble now, and needed Sarandé's help over the rough places in the road. The old mother could no longer go with them. She stayed alone by the fireside. The Cagot girl was not at peace. Her pride had been broken, her love spurned, and she was defiant and angry; yet was there a tenderness within her not known before Arnaud came, and it had softened her wild nature. As she passed the woods where she had been with him that day

The Picture's Message to Sarandé.

when he painted her by the pool, a dreamy softness came to her dark eyes, and her heart beat so quickly that she pressed her hand upon it passionately. The great white mountains that he loved were about her, and they were still flushed with the light of the dawn. They had been more beautiful to her ever since that time because of his love for them. Then there was the leaping, sparkling river that seemed to carry her heart with it to him who was far away. Ah! there was something far different from anger deep down in the maiden's thoughts, and Sarandé knew it, that beautiful Sunday morning, as she walked through the valley to the church.

At last they came to the rampart, and entering under the low arch they were soon again within the little chapel.

There seemed an unusual stir in the church. There was more light than was common, nor was the music the same as on other Sundays. Yet it was not a great feast day, and there seemed no reason for a festal service. Often the singing of the Templars was marred by sternness, and sometimes it seemed an exultant battle-cry; but to-day it was softer, though

full of fervor and intensity. Sarandé listened in wonder. Her father knelt by the wall, and through the little opening he saw the altar. It was a blaze of light, but there was something above it that seemed brighter than the light itself. It seemed to the old man as if he were looking into heaven.

The Picture's Message to Sarandé.

"What is it, father?" said Sarandé.

"Daughter, I know not. There is an angel over the altar, as I think."

"Oh, let me look, I pray thee." He gave her place, and Sarandé, kneeling, looked upon Arnaud's picture.

In a moment the maiden knew the truth. Her heart told her with the quick sympathy of love. Here was the passion of his love as well as the ecstasy of his soul. Those violet eyes!—they seemed a heaven of tenderness. And the pure uplifted brow bright with a light divine —ah, that was hardly the beauty of woman! yes, it was, but it was far more.

Long she knelt there, looking on the picture as the light fell full upon it and the Templars' love-softened hymn rose and died away among the arches and the columns.

The Picture's Message to Sarandé.

Then there was a struggle in her heart. Her passion rose again within her, and she could not bear to think that he loved another.

"Ah, yes, she is beautiful," was her thought, "but he said I was beautiful. Hour after hour he looked on what he called my beauty; and while he looked upon me, even while he painted, he was as one in a dream. How dared he leave me, how could he leave me after that?" She put her hands before her eyes to shut out the picture. She would not look upon it more. She would banish from her mind the woman who had come between her and her love.

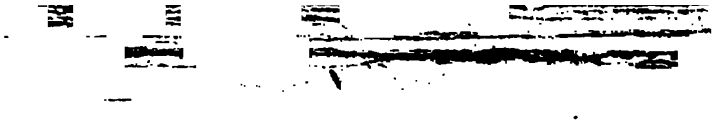
But she stayed kneeling there, and though she would not look she still saw those deep blue eyes, that calm white brow. And then at last another thought came,—a thought of shame and deep humiliation, for she remembered that she had humbled herself before him and offered him her love unsought. In an agony of repentance she forced herself again to look upon this picture, and she knew the woman there could be true and high and pure even in her passion. She felt that the love of

such a one must uplift and not degrade. There was more than love in that heavenly face, — there was inspiration; and Sarandé herself felt that it was lifting her up even against her will. At first she had seen only the face, but now she began to feel the glory of light that was about it, and she knew why such a light was there, — a light that seemed to come from heaven. As she looked longer she became more calm, and the wild jealous passion that had swept over her was stilled. There was here a spirit that had never before touched the wild Cagot girl, and she was beginning to admit its power. At last she thought, —

The Picture's Message to Sarandé.

"I never could have yielded him to any other but to her, to her! Ah, she is not a poor weak woman like me. She is like no other that mine eyes have ever seen. I know she will give him the highest gift love has to give. Perhaps God will quiet my heart at last, and let me think of his happiness in peace."

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Arnaud's Masterpiece · A Romance of the Pyrenees

Walter Cranston Larned